The New
REPUBLIC
MAY 7, 2008 • $4.95

I BOWL WITH JESUS!
And I said to Sinbad, "Leave me, save yourself!"
How do you say "Judas" in Spanish?
If you exclude states that start with a vowel, Americans abroad, and former members of the Confederacy, then multiply my results by pi . . .
Caucuses are elitist!
Wait . . . I'm getting verklempt!
You'll take away this nomination from my cold, dead hands!

THE VOICES IN HER HEAD
HILLARYLAND'S FATAL PSYCHODRAMA
MICHELLE COTTLE

SORRY, OBAMA WON'T END THE IRAQ WAR
MICHAEL CROWLEY

NADERITES vs. NADER
GABRIEL SHERMAN

ADIOS, REAGAN ERA
SEAN WILENTZ

SHAKESPEARE THE PHILOSOPHER
MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

And
IS OBAMA REALLY A MARXIST?
LEON WIESELTIER

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 238 WASHINGTON, MAY 7, 2008 NUMBER 4,835

Dictator on the Brink

With so few accomplishments as he nears the end of his second term, it's not surprising that President Bush often points to Africa as an example of his administration's good deeds. After all, even liberal do-gooders agree that Bush has done a lot for a continent that has traditionally been an afterthought for U.S. foreign policy. Speaking of the administration's distribution of antiretroviral drugs, rock star and super-activist Bono has gushed that hundreds of thousands of HIV-positive Africans "literally owe their lives to America." In 2005, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof crowned Bush "a friend of Africa."

Yet, as positive as the Bush administration's record has been, there are glaring deficiencies. Not just in Darfur, where Western inaction has allowed hundreds of thousands to be slaughtered, but in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, a cruel dictatorship whose accomplishments include the $50,000,000 bill, 80 percent unemployment, and the lowest life expectancy in the world (with a higher death rate than genocide-ridden Darfur). To this list of achievements, Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party can now add losses in the (rigged!) presidential and parliamentary elections—perhaps the only time in history that a dictator has suffered such embarrassment. Rather than relinquish power, however, Mugabe has refused to release the official results of the vote (which were first reported by independent observers). Paramilitary gangs are now attacking ZANU-PF's political opposition, led by trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai, and Mugabe has drawn up plans for full-scale martial law.

Mugabe's rule has been a slow-motion horror show, accentuated in 2000 by his seizure of private farms. In 2003, rather than involve the United States directly, Bush anointed South African President Thabo Mbeki his "point man" on Zimbabwe. It was the perfect choice for an administration staffed by political hacks, and Mbeki has stood by as Mugabe destroyed Zimbabwe, raising nary a word of criticism. Two weeks ago, on his way to an emergency meeting convened by the Southern African Development Community to deal with the fallout of the election, Mbeki stopped in Harare, held hands with the beaming dictator on the steps of his mansion, and defiantly announced, "There is no crisis in Zimbabwe."

Zimbabwe's other neighbors haven't been much help, either. African Union observers declared the election free and fair—the third flawed election they have certified since 2000—and later appeared on Zimbabwean state television backslapping and joking with Mugabe. Compared with Mugabe, who led the resistance against Ian Smith's white Rhodesian government three decades ago, Tsvangirai is on the wrong side of a generational divide. Many African leaders, veterans of anticolonial movements themselves, are terrified at the prospect of seeing Mugabe's ZANU-PF fall, as it could signal the beginning of a post-liberation African politics in which "struggle credentials" don't guarantee a lifetime in power.

African governments could end this crisis if they chose, and stronger cues from the West might make the difference. In the 1970s, South African Prime Minister John Vorster, under pressure from the United States and Great Britain, threatened to cut off electricity and oil supplies to landlocked, white-ruled Rhodesia if the rebel British colony did not accept majority rule. It was hardly in the interest of apartheid's overseers to see a neighboring white regime fall to black rebels, but the West made clear to Vorster that the alternative—increased international pressure—would be worse. Contrast the diplomacy of apartheid South Africa with that of its Rainbow Nation successor: This week, Pretoria allowed a ship from China (Mugabe's patron) carrying three million rounds of ammunition, 3,500 mortars and mortar tubes, and 1,500 rocket-propelled grenades bound for Zimbabwe to dock at Durban harbor.

Amidst this global impassivity, it has been more than a little exhilarating to witness the diplomacy of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, a loud critic of the Mugabe regime. In December, he boycotted a European Union summit that violated its own travel ban against top ZANU-PF officials by hosting Mugabe. On Wednesday, Brown decried Zimbabwe's "stolen election" at the U.N. Security Council, an unmistakable rebuke to Mbeki, who chaired the meeting. The very next day,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: AFP PHOTO/ALEXANDER JOE; MICHAEL VON LINGEN/KEYSTONE PRESSEDIENST/ZUMA PRESS; EFE/ZUMA PRESS; AFP PHOTO/GIANLUIGI GUERCIA

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cracks began to emerge in South Africa's disgraceful policy towards Zimbabwe, when a spokesman announced that his country is "concerned about the delay in the release of the results and the anxiety that this is generating." Maybe talking about human rights *does* get things done.

Voting Block

There is no shortage of reasons for Democrats to be annoyed that the race for their party's nomination has deteriorated into a tedious fight over bitterness, bowling, and Bosnia. Among them is the apparent reality that the party has quietly abandoned any hope of finding a way for voters in Florida and Michigan to make their voices heard during this historic primary season.

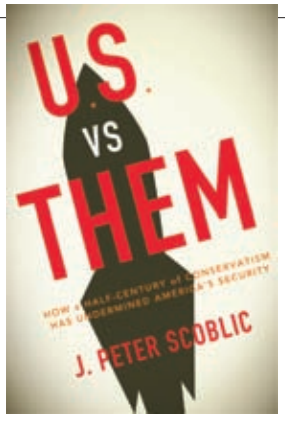
There's no question that the situation is a tricky one: The contests the states held in January cannot be allowed to count—rules are rules—and the prospect of holding new primaries or caucuses has dimmed as a result of financial and logistical challenges. And even Hillary Clinton, who once passionately spoke of these states, doesn't mention them anymore. The party brain trust is praying that the nomination is decided by the remaining ten primaries, so that the two states' delegations can be seated without incident at the convention in Denver.

The only problem is that one in ten Americans is either a Floridian or a Michigander, and they are being disenfranchised. One would hope that this would be cause for distress, but most Democrats seem to be greeting the news with a yawn. At this point, almost everybody cares more about settling on a candidate than about ensuring that the nominating process is fair.

This is an understandable impulse, but, in a democracy, procedural questions cannot be disregarded so casually without eventually undermining the system's legitimacy. Sadly, this is all too often the case. Most Americans took no notice when, in September, Senate Republicans blocked a bill that would have granted the District of Columbia a vote in the House of Representatives (and added a Republican seat in Utah to maintain party balance). But it meant that the District's some 600,000 residents will continue to lack a vote in Congress for the foreseeable future.

Even more troubling are practices that effectively exclude entire classes of citizens from democratic participation. Eleven states prohibit ex-felons from voting, even after they have repaid their debt to society in full. (To his credit, Florida's Republican governor, Charlie Crist, last year managed to amend state law and restore voting rights to most ex-felons—though the change came too late to prevent more than half a million Floridians from being disenfranchised in the 2004 election.) The Supreme Court looks set to uphold an Indiana law, similar to statutes on the books in other states, that requires voters to present photo identification at the polls—even though tens of thousands of the state's residents (disproportionately poor, black, and elderly) lack such identification, and studies routinely show that voter fraud exists mostly just in the minds of partisan Republicans.

Process issues like these aren't sexy, and no electoral system will ever be perfect. But, as the race for the Democratic nomination reminds us once again that sometimes every vote really does count, it's as good a time as any to focus our attention on the sad truth that, for too many Americans, democracy remains a promise unfulfilled. ◆



HOME NEWS

American foreign policy has been the subject of countless tomes during the past few years. That's why *U.S. vs. Them*, written by our executive editor, J. Peter Scoblic, is such a revelation. It provides an entirely fresh analysis of the conservative movement's geopolitics. Mining forgotten texts and neglected history, Peter uncovers the true genealogy of the Bush doctrine. By digging deeper, he has somehow managed to make the past seven years even more frightening.

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Popular Will

Conservatives perfect working-class p.c.

JONATHAN CHAIT

Barack Obama's comments about the white working class have thrown the political campaign into a particularly comic spasm of pretense and hypocrisy, but I was planning to let it go, I really was, until George F. Will decided to leap to the defense of the proletariat. Yes, *that* George F. Will. The fabulously wealthy, bow tie–wearing, pretentious reference–mongering, Anglophilic fop who grew up in a university town as a professor's son, earned two advanced degrees, has a designated table at a French restaurant in Georgetown, and, had he dwelt for any extended time among the working class, would be lucky to escape without his underwear being yanked up over his ears. Will devoted his column to expressing his displeasure at Obama's "condescension" toward the working class.

Obama's offense, as we all know, was to call white working-class voters "bitter" over their economic misfortune during the last few decades, and thus prone to "cling to" guns and religion. Taken literally, Obama was saying that these voters have taken up religion and gun ownership only over the last few decades—a notion so transparently false that he surely couldn't believe it. And, in fact, he doesn't: In a 2004 interview with Charlie Rose, Obama described how traditions of hunting and churchgoing stretch back generations. He proceeded to argue that, in the absence of plausible economic improvement, people in small towns will vote on the basis of those traditions that give their lives stability. This is not a controversial view among Democrats. Bill Clinton once said that Republicans "find the most economically insecure white men and scare the living daylights out of them"—a less respectful expression of the same analysis.

But Clinton said that more than a decade and a half ago, and, since then, Democrats and Republicans have developed an exquisite sensitivity toward any slight against the white working class. Blue-collar whites now occupy the same position in American politics that people of color hold in the smaller political subculture of academia: a victim-hero class whose positions (usually as interpreted by outsiders) enjoy the presumption of moral superiority.

TRB
From Washington

The victim-hero class is the object of competitive flattery and the subject of mutual accusations of disrespect. You can't read a Peggy Noonan paean to real America—"a healthy and vibrant place full of religious feeling and cultural energy and Bible study and garage bands and sports-love and mom-love and sophistication and normality"—without thinking of a junior faculty member extolling the dignity of Guatemalan peasant women. Bill O'Reilly's or Tim Russert's endless invocations of their working-class backgrounds are the equivalent of the campus activist who introduces every opinion by saying "As a woman of color . . . ." (The one difference being that the latter really is a woman of color, while the former are multimillionaires who retain only the most remote connection to blue-collar life.)

Since blue-collar whites have been trending Republican, conservatives enjoy a presumptive affinity and have taken it upon themselves to police the political culture for any affronts against their favored class. The rules of the game, understood now by all sides, hold that elitism is defined entirely in social, rather than economic, terms. Thus Obama's attempts to highlight his (relative) lack of wealth did not win him any points. Nor did McCain's campaign manager, Rick Davis, attract any criticism when he called Obama an "elitist" within a few days of convening a gathering of Washington lobbyists at Johnny's Half Shell on Capitol Hill.

On the other hand, McCain did stir up a bit of negative publicity when bloggers discovered that what his campaign website billed as Cindy McCain's recipes turned out to be copied verbatim from the Food Network. To be down with the working class, you needn't represent its political interests or even share its lifestyle. You simply have to be able to convincingly imitate its social customs.

To urge the white working class to vote on the basis of economic policy is itself considered an act of elitism. When Obama and other liberals reproach blue-collar whites for voting their values over their wallet, argues Will, they are accusing those workers of "false consciousness." A *Wall Street Journal* editorial took umbrage that Obama "diminishes the convictions of those voters who care more about the right to bear arms, or faith in God, than they do about the AFL-CIO's agenda."

But nobody's challenging the validity of *caring* more about your religion, or even your right to hunt, than your income. The objection is whether it makes sense to *vote* on that basis. There are, after all, stark differences between the two parties on economic matters. Republicans do want to make working-class voters pay a higher proportion of the tax burden, restrain popular social programs, erode the value of the minimum wage, and so on.

Democrats, on the other hand, have no plans to keep anybody from attending church or hunting. A few years ago, their gun-control agenda revolved around issues like safety locks, banning assault weapons, and other restrictions carefully designed to have virtually no impact on hunters or average gun owners. Now Democrats have abandoned even those meager steps. The GOP's appeal on those "issues" rests on cultural pandering rather than any concrete legislative program.

And, while it may be elitist to say so, voting for a politician merely because he can mimic your lifestyle is not a very good idea. George Will and the *Journal* editors would never dream of voting on the basis of which candidate related best to their culture. They support the candidates who share their policy goals, not those who share their passion for watching baseball, or flogging the servants, or whatever other pastimes they may enjoy.

Now, it's true that many working-class whites also vote on social issues that do have some political relevance, like abortion or gay marriage. It's certainly not irrational on its face to vote your values over your wallet. (Democratic billionaires do it, too.) On the other hand, conservatives routinely express their fury that a majority of Jews stubbornly flout their own "self-interest"—defined as low tax rates and a maximally hawkish Middle East policy—to vote Democratic. The process of trying to persuade others to reconsider the nature of their self-interest is not some Marxist exercise or an accusation of false consciousness. It's what we call "democracy."

Sorry, did that sound condescending? ◆

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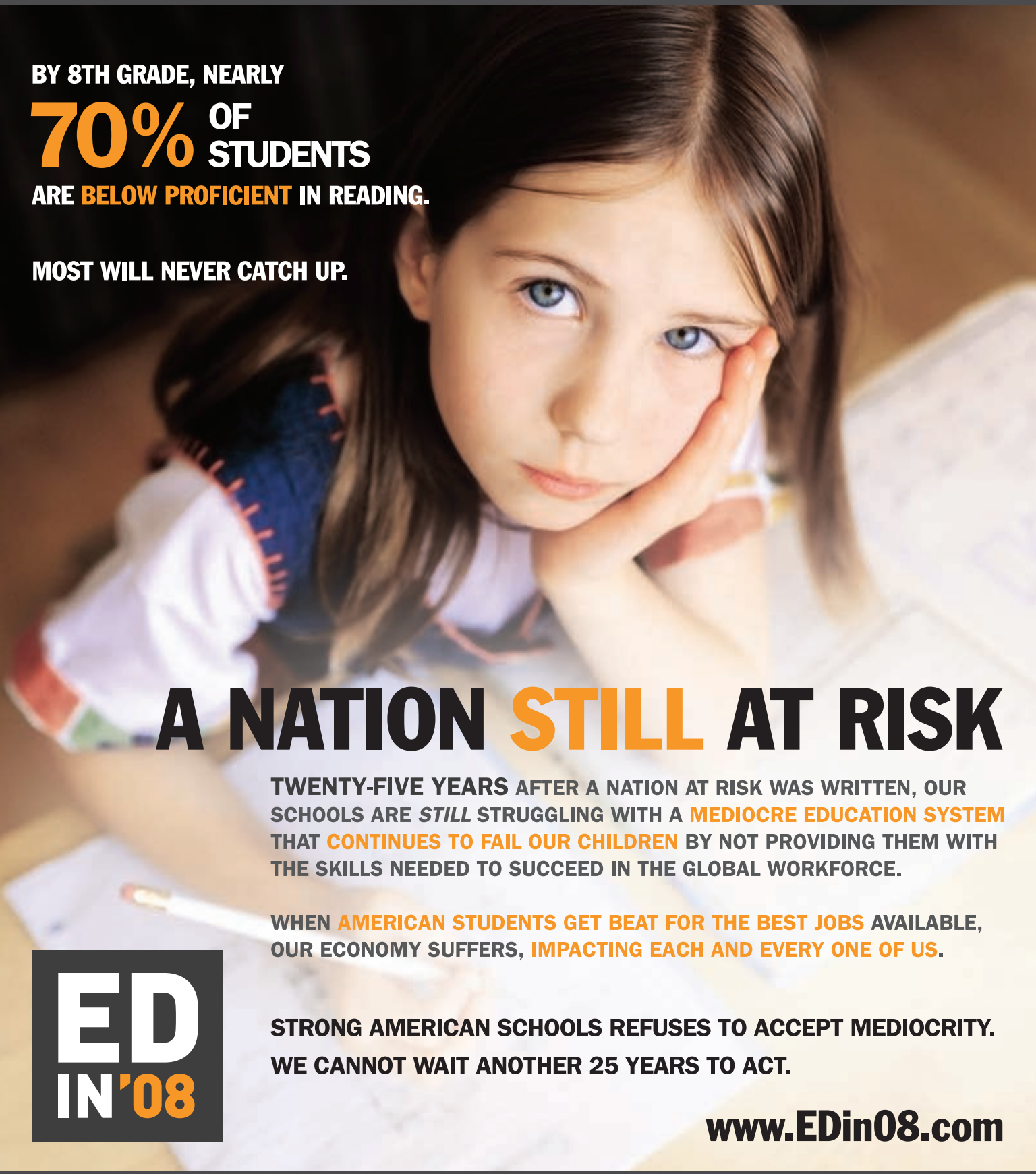
STRONG AMERICAN SCHOOLS



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Nader's Traitors

Public Enemy No. 1.

Last year, Ken Cook, co-founder and president of the Environmental Working Group, received a letter from Ralph Nader asking his nonprofit organization to join with him in lobbying Congress on the pending Farm Bill. (Nader was advocating for an increase in the domestic production of hemp.) Cook had known Nader for more than 35 years and had collaborated with him on issues including air quality and pesticide use during the 1980s and '90s. At the bottom of the typed letter, Nader added a handwritten note: "Ken, let's work on this." Cook read the letter, then threw it in the trash.

"I didn't have any interest in working with Ralph Nader on something like that. It would be worse than worthless," Cook recalls. "He doesn't have any credibility or access to people we already have access to. In the public-interest community, he presumes to speak for progressives, and we're left behind cleaning up the shit."

It wasn't long ago that Nader still commanded broad support among the Democratic left. In 2000, Michael Moore and Susan Sarandon headlined a sold-out Nader rally at Madison Square Garden supporting his presidential campaign. Progressive groups embraced him, and he was a sought-after speaker on college campuses.

Al Gore's loss in 2000—and Nader's perceived role as a spoiler by angry Democrats—changed everything. Today, there seems to be an inverse relationship between Nader's political ambitions and his profile as a consumer advocate. Many of the very groups Nader founded, including Public Citizen and the Center for Study of Responsive Law (CSRL), have distanced themselves from his presidential run. Nader personally built the ideological infrastructure of the progressive Washington establishment. But, these days, it's among the Nader faithful that he's least welcome.

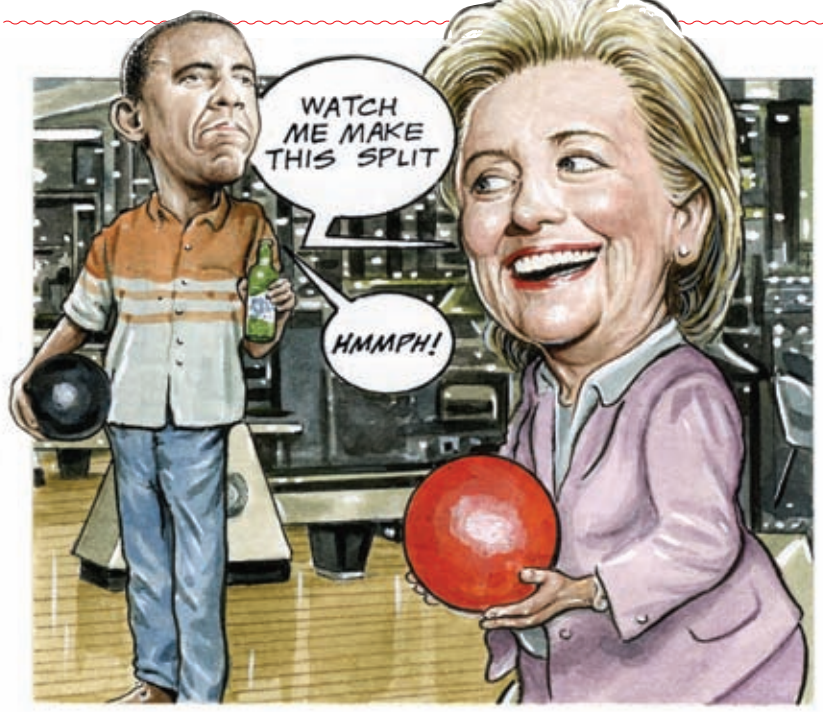
"The Democratic Party needs a lot of pushing and prodding and condemning the way Ralph seems to be doing," Roger Hickey, co-director of Campaign for America's Future and a Nader supporter until 2000, says, "but running as an independent candidate for the White House that draws potential voters away is the worst way to do that."

Nader's expulsion to the periphery of progressive circles is striking given that, over almost four decades, he served as the movement's activist core. Since he arrived in Washington in the early '60s, Nader has founded nearly three dozen nonprofit groups championing everything from auto safety to clean air. Progressives, buoyed by his success in winning landmark legislation on consumer issues, wanted him on the frontlines in Washington. Electoral politics seemed like a natural progression, but, initially, Nader shunned them. In the early days, "many of us urged him to be more political," says Hickey.

By the '90s, however, Nader had become increasingly disillusioned, perceiving the Democratic Party as ever more closely aligned with corporate interests. His 2000 campaign was energized by anger over this alliance and by progressives' parallel frustration with Al Gore's reluctance to run hard on liberal causes including the environment and trade. Running as a Green Party candidate, Nader won more than 2.5 million votes.

Then Florida happened, and former donors, angered by Nader's perceived role

WHITE HOUSE WATCH With DREW FRIEDMAN



What actually matters to white working-class voters…

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in Gore's loss and by Nader's pronouncement that there was no fundamental difference between the Democratic and Republican parties, stopped contributing to Nader-aligned nonprofits. Public Citizen, the most well-known of the Nader nonprofit consumer groups, lost 20 percent of its members and saw its donations drop by $1 million, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Not long after the Florida recount, Public Citizen formally distanced itself from Nader in a fund-raising letter pointing out that the group was wholly independent from Nader's political activities.

This February, the director of the CSRL, John Richard, sent out a memo reminding staffers that the group was not to be involved in Nader's political activities. "Federal law prohibits organizations such as ours from becoming directly or indirectly involved in campaigns of political candidates," Richard wrote. "If anyone calls about Ralph's efforts in the electoral arena, you should clearly say that this office is not involved."

Citizen Works, a nonprofit advocacy group Nader founded in 2001, has been especially weakened by the decline in his public image. At its peak in 2003, Citizen Works had seven full-time staffers advocating for corporate reform in the wake of the Enron and WorldCom scandals. But, since then, Citizen Works has collapsed. According to tax filings, Citizen Works ran a $4,800 deficit in 2006. That same year, the group had to vacate its offices in Washington, D.C. and lay off its paid staff. "Due to budgetary constraints, we have recently decided it is more economically efficient to operate over the Internet," Citizen Works's president, Brian Conlon, tells me in an e-mail.

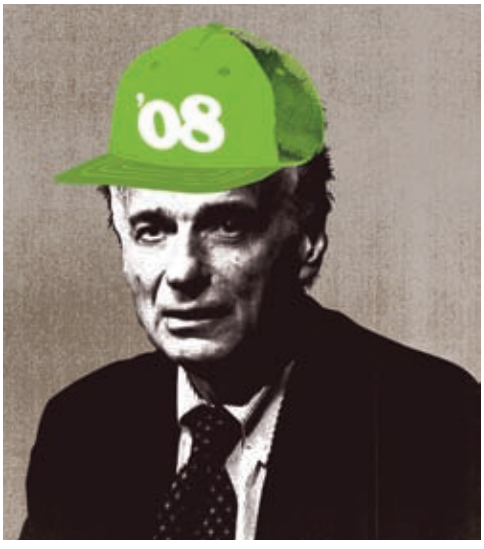
Theresa Amato, Nader's former 2004 campaign manager and a member of Citizen Works's board of directors, chalked up Citizen Works's troubles to the decline in public attention to corporate fraud and dismissed the idea that Nader's toxicity in the eyes of many progressives hurt the group's fund-raising. But Joan Claybrook, who has served as president of Public Citizen since 1982, puts the source of Citizen Works's trouble in Nader's lap: "Citizen Works was dependent on Ralph for fund-raising."

NADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT of his decision to launch another quixotic campaign this year, made in February on "Meet the Press," reignited progressives' fears that he would tip a tightly contested election to the Republicans. "I told him it was a big mistake," Marcus Raskin, co-founder of the Institute for Policy Studies, says. Amy Isaacs, the national director of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), tells me that "there is no reason for him to run again, except his own ego."

Nader's third run for the presidency confounds many of his former allies in the progressive movement for its sheer implausibility. "His race this year will get no attention, attract few votes, and have no importance," Robert Borosage, president of the Institute for America's Future, says. "It will be little more than an embarrassment to him and others." Even his close friends are disappointed in his decision. "I wish he didn't run," says James Love, the director of the Consumer Project on Technology, who has known Nader for 20 years.

Many of Nader's former allies have greeted the tepid response to Nader's presidential campaign with a mix of schadenfreude and relief. "There's been a few phone calls about the campaign," Claybrook tells me. "We refer those calls over to Ralph at the campaign office. I haven't seen any remarkable reaction, and I hope that I don't."

During Nader's previous run in the 2004 presidential race, Isaacs, of the ADA, set up a website called DamnedBigDifference.org to fight Nader's critiques that the Democrats and Republicans had grown indistinguishable from each other. This time around, she's less worried. "I really do think it's a pity he's spending his time and effort running for president," she says. "I don't have any patience for it." Still, she also says that his prospects for tipping the 2008 election to the Republicans don't alarm her as much these days, and she won't be ramping up her anti-Nader website again unless his candidacy appears potent—surely an unlikely possibility this season. *GABRIEL SHERMAN*



ANDRIO ABERO

Plouffe Piece

The commander of Obama's nerd army.

BY OCTOBER OF 2007, we in the press had decided that, if Barack Obama was going to make a move, he had better do it soon. Unfortunately for Obama, so had some of his most influential donors. As they gathered at a Des Moines art gallery for a quarterly meeting, these moneymen were visibly anxious. Why wasn't Obama closing the gap in Iowa? Shouldn't he go negative on Hillary?

It fell to campaign manager David Plouffe to quell the panic. He ticked off the number of offices Obama had in Iowa and the dates they'd opened. He listed the precincts where Obama would do well among backers of non-viable candidates. The following day, Plouffe's team played a video of Senator Tom Harkin's annual steak fry, which the campaign had flooded with supporters. He even put the moneymen through a simulated caucus, in which they chose among breakfast foods rather than candidates.

It was a spectacular display of intimate Iowa knowledge. "At the end of that people felt, 'Okay, . . . you're right, we are going to win Iowa,'" recalls Kirk Wagar, a member of Obama's national finance committee. And it was quintessential Plouffe. Beginning with Harkin's 1992 campaign for president, Plouffe has served multiple tours in Iowa and become the de facto president of a small fraternity of operatives who pride themselves on mastery of the state's demographics, geography, and procedural rules. If political strategy tends to attract nerds—think Karl Rove's obsession with the election of 1896—Iowa attracts the nerdiest of the bunch.

It's often assumed that the limits of such political nerd-dom roughly coincide with the borders of Iowa and New Hampshire—that presidential campaigns become momentum-driven, television-saturated affairs once they leave the early states. There's no doubt something to this—the Obama campaign has been running on a mix of soaring rhetoric and media buzz since January. But, under Plouffe, the tedious work of crunching numbers and scouring precinct maps has remained a central campaign obsession. Plouffe has run the entire Obama campaign as though it were the Iowa caucus writ large. And it's brought Obama to the brink of the nomination.

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They fought for us. Now we need to fight for them.

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U.S. Army, Korea

William Broadwater
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Noe Santos-Dilone
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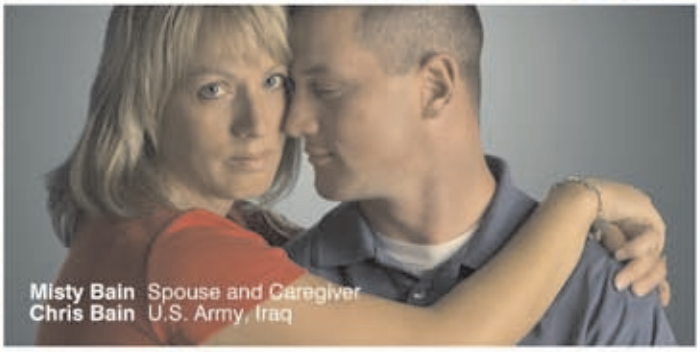
Tony DeStefano
U.S. Army, Iraq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Plouffe has spent much of his career toiling for Dick Gephardt, more or less the stylistic antithesis of Obama. But his work for the former House Democratic leader, especially orchestrating Gephardt's effort to reclaim Congress in 2000, raised Plouffe's profile and propelled him to a partnership with a Chicago message guru named David Axelrod. Beginning in 2003, Axelrod and Plouffe lent their services to the long-shot senatorial bid of an ambitious Illinois state legislator.

Axelrod is widely credited for crafting Obama's image, and that was certainly the case in 2004. But the campaign that made Obama famous wouldn't have happened without Plouffe's mechanical wizardry. He devised a plan that would get Obama one-third of the vote in the seven-candidate Democratic field—enough to give him a shot at winning the primary. Obama invested so much trust in his strategic judgment that "What does Plouffe think about this?" became a constant refrain of internal discussions, according to campaign manager Jim Cauley.

It's not surprising that Obama and Plouffe would feel comfortable with one another. The rail-thin, flinty-eyed Plouffe is militantly averse to publicity, a trait the senator values. A search of articles with eight or more mentions of "Plouffe" generated exactly one more hit for the Obama campaign manager (five) than University of Washington basketball standout Andrea Plouffe (four). When I petitioned for an interview, an aide said Plouffe "pointedly refuses." John Lapp, a former Gephardt colleague, told me he recently arranged for Plouffe to appear in *Details* magazine's list of the 50 most influential people under 45. Plouffe instructed an aide to get him out of it.

Plouffe is a fanatical baseball fan who played in an organized league into his thirties. Friends compare his pitching style to Greg Maddux, who battles late into games on the strength of his wits rather than a blazing fastball. That's been his campaign strategy, too: Where most underdog campaigns bet everything on a quick upset in Iowa or New Hampshire, Plouffe constructed a meticulous plan to turn the race into a long, drawn-out delegate slog.

As the primary calendar fell into place, it became clear that February 5 wouldn't much resemble the Super Tuesdays of old. Instead, it would be a de facto national primary that sprawled across two dozen states. The conventional wisdom was that mechanical strength would get you nowhere in such a contest, since you couldn't organize half the country. What would be decisive was local establishment support and name recognition, which Hillary Clinton had in droves.

Plouffe disagreed. Back in April 2007, he'd hired a former Gephardt strategist named Jeff Berman, probably the party's most respected authority on the dark art of delegate math. When Plouffe and Berman sized up the states in play on February 5, they realized they could at least secure a draw, sending the race into a two-week period that strongly favored Obama. The idea was to build a sturdy base by targeting key primaries and relentlessly organizing the caucus states. By fall, Plouffe and his field staff, led by a lieutenant named John Carson, were already setting up ground operations in places like Idaho, Kansas, and Colorado. Carson's teams had cased these states for months when the Clintonites finally arrived. In effect, Plouffe wanted to turn the entire campaign into Iowa.

One of Plouffe's most underappreciated accomplishments began, fittingly enough, with a spreadsheet. After New Hampshire, Plouffe realized that, if the campaign was going to become a battle of attrition, he needed convince onlookers that the pledged-delegate total was sacrosanct. "His thought was that we need to cement that into the conventional wisdom," recalls an Obama aide. "That we couldn't rely on media outlets, because different folks have different standards." To this end, Plouffe had Berman set up a sophisticated counting operation that would compile votes and generate delegate allocations. The product of all this hairy math would be an intricately constructed, color-coded Excel file showing a state-by-state breakdown, along with projections going forward. One of the first such spreadsheets trickled into the press shortly after February 5, showing Obama with a pledged-delegate lead of 24 and projecting a tight race through June. It had all the look and feel of a leaked internal document, and its immaculate birth in a Bloomberg article only reinforced the impression. The pundits commenced buzzing over this rare glimpse inside the thoughts of the Obama campaign.

Over the course of the next two weeks, Obama piled up eleven straight victories and an ever-widening delegate-lead. (Plouffe had shrewdly conserved money for a mid-February blitzkrieg, while the Clinton campaign blew its cash coming up short on Super Tuesday.) The Obama campaign was dropping spreadsheets like a nightclub drops fliers, and—whether or not the early Bloomberg leak was intentional—they were now a sophisticated form of spin. Before long, the press had essentially accepted pledged delegates as their yardstick. On the day when Obama had achieved what the campaign deemed an insurmountable lead, Plouffe let it be known he thought the race had reached a turning point, according to one colleague.

Plouffe's penchant for understatement makes colleagues' ears perk up any time he ventures such an opinion. Pretty much the only time anyone in Obamaland can recall Plouffe betraying real emotion was on a late-night conference call after the crushing loss in New Hampshire. Plouffe methodically laid out the plan for the upcoming states. Then, at a fraction of a decibel louder than his usual gravelly whisper, proclaimed, "Now let's go win this fucking thing." It would have been unremarkable coming from any other operative. For Plouffe, it was tantamount to a dramatic reciting of Mel Gibson's battlefield monologue in *Braveheart*. Onward, nerd soldiers.

Noam Scheiber

Stephen Savage

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Cleaning House

Too many people own homes.

In the midst of the subprime crisis, there's an important question that analysts and policymakers have neglected: Did so many people need to own homes in the first place? The dream of home ownership has long been part of the American experience, but, as the federal government steps in to artificially support borrowers and lenders with tax credits that encourage more spending or with public spending that keeps over-indebted borrowers in unaffordable homes, we ought to consider whether it's time to wake up from that dream.

Indeed, we ought to consider what role the federal government has played in creating this mess. By stimulating home ownership while failing to account for the reasons home ownership is valuable to society, Washington has simply sought to buy our votes with our own debt. As the subprime crisis accelerates and threatens to spread through prime and near-prime markets, policymakers face a watershed moment. To keep us from an economic nightmare, they need to replace the dream of home ownership with policies that actually increase wealth—not just the illusion of it.

The term "mortgage" comes from the French root *mort*, meaning dead, and the Germanic root *gage*, meaning pledge, which suggests how seriously the use of debt to buy a home was once taken. Traditionally, buyers purchased their first home in their twenties or thirties as they were starting a family, and, since the 1930s, they almost always financed that purchase with a 15- or 30-year fixed-rate mortgage that required monthly payments of principal and interest. Because it was relatively difficult to sell, the home was in essence a forced savings plan that increasingly tied the interests of the borrower to those of the community.

However, in recent years a confluence of factors—falling interest rates, new types of mortgages, the elimination of the once-standard 20 percent down payment, and a perverse tax structure that provides the greatest benefit to those that borrow the most—have transformed the home from an illiquid asset into just another consumer good. Home owners now have less equity in their properties, and, as a result, the social benefits of home ownership have decreased; their ties to their communities have been weakened. What's more, the decline in home equity means that Americans are likely to retire with fewer savings in what has been historically their largest asset and, in turn, place a larger burden on a social welfare system that will already be stressed by baby boomers' retirements.

The government has been directly responsible for this shift, working proactively with industry since 1995 to "achieve an all-time high level of homeownership." Unfortunately, the only way policymakers and the housing industry could do this at a time when home prices were beginning to rise rapidly was to create risky financial products, like mortgages with fluctuating interest rates—or what the government euphemistically termed "creative financing." Borrowers, in turn, flocked to these loans because, while they dreamed of owning a home, the growth in wages had not kept pace with the appreciation in real estate prices for most of the past 40 years. As a result, in markets like Miami and Las Vegas, where home prices rose rapidly relative to wages, borrowers were forced to become more and more leveraged. And, even in markets like Akron, Ohio, and Ann Arbor, Michigan, where housing prices weren't so supercharged, falling wages and job flight made it difficult to buy a home at all. Today, more Americans may "own" their homes in a very narrow sense—home ownership has jumped from its usual level of 62–64 percent (where it had stayed for 40 years) to almost 70 percent—but the market's natural equilibrium has been disturbed by the government's attempts at social engineering.

Rather than artificially stimulating home ownership, the government should have focused more on supporting wage growth. This would have enabled workers to accumulate real wealth, rather than simply encouraging the illusion of wealth formed when one buys an expensive house by taking on an unmanageable amount of debt. In the current climate, the government could stimulate the economy by investing in infrastructure—schools to re-educate displaced workers, highways to link suburban or rural labor to business centers, and other programs that encourage employment rather than giving consumers one-time tax credits that simply spur further excessive spending and further indebtedness. In contrast with helping citizens to buy expensive property, strengthening America's economic foundation is not only an appropriate function for government, but arguably its most basic task.

Instead of reassessing its priorities in the wake of the current crisis, however, the government is now trying to keep home prices artificially high by offering risky programs to prevent homes from selling on the open market, such as expanding the Federal Housing Administration's purchase of low-down payment and risky mortgages and urging the "modification" of existing mortgages. These efforts primarily benefit realtors and lenders by allowing them to recast mortgages and receive a few more payments from the 40 percent of borrowers who will redefault anyway. Instead of modifying their loan terms, many troubled borrowers would be better served by simply sending their house keys back to their lenders and signing over the title to the home, thereby freeing up cash to rent or buy a more affordable house while avoiding a bankruptcy or foreclosure. In fact, most lenders would be better off, too, since they could avoid the expense of foreclosing on a property that is falling in value and that the borrower is no longer maintaining. Unfortunately, a "keep the borrowers in their homes" mentality in Washington, which is emotionally attractive to borrowers and economically attractive to lending lobbyists, has prevented policymakers from embracing this option.

Those who support government

Kurt Ketchum

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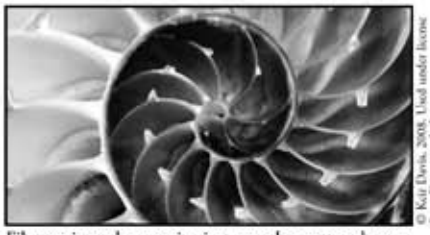

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Fibonacci numbers, an intricate number pattern known as a recurrence sequence, appear throughout nature in unexpected places like the spirals of shells.

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Edward B. Burger, Professor of Mathematics in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Williams College, earned his Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin. Professor Burger's teaching and scholarly works have been nationally recognized; most recently, Williams College awarded Professor Burger the 2007 Nelson Bushnell Prize for Scholarship and Teaching.

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intervention maintain that falling home prices are a danger. But a danger to whom? Falling prices would allow new buyers to purchase homes they could genuinely afford, and existing borrowers who are able to make payments would continue to build equity in their homes. People would also have less incentive to frequently flip from one home to another, and thus they would deepen and lengthen their ties and obligations to their communities. Falling prices might even allow a return to the increasingly rare single-income household, thus allowing one parent to tend to the needs of the family's children. Besides which, in our drive to spur home ownership, we have stigmatized renting. Renting has real economic value—especially for that portion of the workforce that needs to remain mobile in order to find employment—yet investment in rental properties has been minimal for decades.

For the past decade, Americans have increasingly relied on the appreciation of their homes, rather than the returns of their labors, to support themselves, creating an unsustainable and destabilizing economic mirage. Home ownership will—and should—remain a goal, but only if it brings with it the long-term commitment that a mortgage traditionally implied. Home ownership is a social good as long as it allows buyers to build equity—an investment not only in their house but in their community—but a home without equity is really just a rental with debt.

JOSHUA ROSNER

Joshua Rosner is managing director of Graham Fisher, an independent research consultancy.

Manufacturing Plant

When hard hats go granola.

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

FOR THE PAST WEEK, the entirety of American politics has seemed to hinge on Pennsylvania—and not just Pennsylvania, but a set of very specific questions about liberals, elitism, and the working-class voters who have long made up the backbone of the state's electorate. The immediate question, of course, is how these voters will react to Barack Obama's now-infamous comments about the alleged bitterness of small-town America. The bigger question, though—the one that has haunted liberalism for more than a generation—is whether Obama, or any Democrat, can put together a permanent progressive majority by reuniting the long-estranged siblings of the New Deal coalition: liberal elites and the working-class voters who, as we are so often told, really *really* can't stand them.

Perhaps no issue has divided liberalism along class lines as persistently or as cleanly as the environment. For almost its entire existence, the environmental movement has struggled with the perception that its agenda clashes with the problems of working people. Environmentalists know exactly what Barack Obama is going through this week, because for decades they have had to fend off essentially the same charge: that they represent a privileged strain of liberalism.

Will this always be the case? That is where people like Marco Trbovich come in. Appropriately enough, I met Trbovich in Pittsburgh, a working-class town whose economy long revolved around steel mills. Unsurprisingly, the city has never been a hotbed of green sentiment. And Trbovich, a sturdy, third-generation steelworker, doesn't exactly fit the profile of an environmental enthusiast. "There are still a lot of people in Pittsburgh who think the environmental movement killed the steel industry," he explains.

And yet, when I met him, Trbovich was speaking at an environmental conference. The event, co-sponsored by the United Steelworkers (USW) and the Sierra Club, focused on what's now the hottest topic in environmental circles: green-collar jobs. Much of the excitement about these jobs has to do with policy—they seem to represent a way to balance union interests with ecological necessity. But this budding area of employment may also represent something else: the environmental movement's best shot at shedding the snobbish reputation that has dogged it for a full century. If green-collar jobs succeed in transforming the way labor veterans like Trbovich work, they could also succeed in transforming the way many Americans think about environmentalism.

ANTHONY RUSSO

CLASS DISTINCTIONS were bred into the green movement from the beginning, as elite families like the Roosevelts and Rockefellers backed early conservation efforts that generally privileged aesthetics over economics. The Sierra Club itself was at first a social organization that arranged outdoor adventures for its leisured members. In 1962, Rachel Carson (who grew up along the Allegheny River just north of Pittsburgh) published *Silent Spring* to expose the role of chemicals and industrial pollutants in the production cycle, promoting the defense-of-nature model that animates groups like the National Wildlife Federation, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and the Sierra Club to this day. But, although *Silent Spring* talks extensively about factories, the seminal text makes virtually no mention of the people working inside them.

Nor have contemporary environmentalists always shown much consideration for working-class needs. Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger have critiqued a perennial tone-deafness on kitchen-table issues among environmentalists, accusing them of seeing American prosperity "as the cause of but not the solution to pollution and degradation." Frequently, conservationists have found themselves directly at odds with union interests—and greens haven't been especially careful about whose toes they tread on while pursuing their agenda. As recently as 2004, Sierra Club Global Warming Director Dan Becker scoffed at any attempts to reach across the factory fence. "We're not a union or the Labor Department," he said. "Our job is to protect the environment, not to create an industrial policy for the United States."

Such sentiments haven't exactly endeared greens to the labor movement. Chuck Prinzen, a Teamster for 50 years, describes the divisions on the California docks this way: "Those people that were working inside offices, with their air conditioning and such—we say they have their environment and we have our environment." Labor groups in industries like logging or car manufacturing have spent years fighting the conservation agenda and blaming green victories like the Endangered Species Act for draining jobs in construction and development. By 1997, the AFL-CIO saw fit to campaign against U.S. adoption of the Kyoto Protocols, which it regarded as an economic albatross, and, in 2002, the Teamsters sided with conservative Republicans to push for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Of course, both groups have consistently endorsed and campaigned for

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Democrats throughout this period, and there have been occasional moments of synergy, as when greens and blues teamed up to push the Clean Air and the Occupational Health and Safety acts in the 1970s. But "it was easier to do that when the economy was booming," says Les Leopold, a labor historian and co-founder of the Public Health Institute. Since the rust belt began to tighten in the '80s, the character of the relationship has overwhelmingly been one of mutual mistrust and rivalry, with the greens viewed as hostile to the problems everyday people face.

Now green-collar jobs are providing an obvious incentive for compromise. The idea is to bring about the greening of the United States while restocking the beleaguered labor movement with good positions—in both traditional fields (such as building the storkish steel turbines that now dot Pennsylvanian hills) and new ones (like energy audits, efficiency retrofitting, and biofuel production). Initially, however, unions and environmentalists were chary of a partnership. A chief complaint from workers was that green jobs in new, non-unionized industries could sap the influence and membership of existing labor groups. Already, plans for a solar power plant in Fresno, California, have been delayed by challenges from an electrical-workers union irked at having been left out of a contract. Moreover, not all unions are happy about the proposed "sunsetting" of the carbon-based economy. Says Phil Smith of the United Mine Workers of America, "This union cannot be in a position to say, 'It's OK, we're going to stop using coal,' so all the members can lose their jobs and their families can lose their benefits and the retirees can lose their pensions. We're just not going to do that."

But other large unions have begun to view jobs in green industries as an intriguing means of expansion. In 2005, USW leadership reached out to Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope. Together, the groups formed a joint organization called the Blue-Green Alliance that's committed to a new industrial policy based on the twin causes of sustainability and job creation. Although USW was the first to bow, the environmentalists "were just waiting to be asked," says former Steelworker Dave Foster, executive director of the Blue-Green Alliance.

There are early signs that the partnership could yield results. At the Blue-Green conference in Pittsburgh, break-out sessions on "Public Sector Transportation Investment" and "Creating Demand for Green Chemicals" demonstrated the wide spectrum of job possibilities in a cleaner economy. A 2006 study showed that 22 different sectors of the U.S. economy contain green-collar work. In Berkeley, these jobs paid more than double California's minimum wage. And, in December, the federal government made a $125 million investment in future green growth. "It's not an earth-science question," says Bracken Hendricks, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. "There's concrete to pour, there's rail to tie, there's major manufacturing and service industry for bringing people into the middle class."

Admittedly, the green economy remains in its infancy, and no one knows whether the hopes of its most bullish promoters will be borne out. But, if they are, it could mean upending entrenched beliefs about what it means to be an environmentalist. True, old stereotypes die hard. "There are people in the Steelworkers who view the Sierra Club as tree-huggers, and there may be those in the Sierra Club that view us as Luddites," Marco Trbovich tells me in Pittsburgh. Then again, no one said that repairing bridges between liberal elites and working-class voters was easy. Just ask Barack Obama.

Dayo Olopade

Festival of the Dead

The gross exploitation of Cambodia's past.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

An hour's drive from downtown Phnom Penh sits a campus of modern office buildings. The architecture is standard office-park fare, but with fantastic crowns of golden lintels and red tiles—traditional Khmer designs—grafted atop. (The effect is rather like seeing a businessman wearing a papal crown.) The offices were originally constructed for the military, and a sign that reads ROYAL CAMBODIAN ARMED FORCES still hangs on one gate. Elsewhere on the campus, a large bronze statue of a warrior on a pedestal stares down at onlookers, one arm pointing an accusing finger, the other brandishing a club. My guide, an American who works for the United Nations, tells me that it is a traditional Cambodian representation of justice. But, he adds, wrinkling his nose, he doesn't much like it. "It's not what justice should look like," he says. "You know, the lady with the blindfold and the scales."

The question of what, exactly, justice looks like is in the air here because the campus is home to the tribunal that is slated to begin trying five top Khmer Rouge officials within the next few months. Backed by the United Nations, the tribunal represents the first attempt to prosecute leaders of the Khmer Rouge in almost 30 years. After the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in 1979 and put a halt to the killing, they held a cursory trial, widely regarded as a sham. In the years that followed, no comprehensive attempt was made to hold surviving Khmer Rouge officials accountable for the estimated 1.5 million people who perished under their rule between 1975 and 1979. History loomed, ominous and inscrutable, and the questions surrounding the Cambodian killings fields, questions that might have been answered through trials, went largely unaddressed. Why had the

David Cowles

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Khmer Rouge kept such meticulous records—rooms upon rooms of file cabinets containing labeled photos of victims, taken both before and after death? Why were some people killed for offenses as superficial as wearing glasses, while others were not? Why were so many of the guards at the notorious S-21 detention center—responsible for interrogating and torturing tens of thousands—middle-school-aged children?

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998 without ever having to answer these questions. But some of his deputies survive, including the five whose trials are expected to begin soon: Kaing Guek Eav, head of the S-21 prison; Nuon Chea, the Khmer Rouge's chief ideologist; Khieu Samphan, former chief of state; Ieng Sary, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister; and his wife, Ieng Thirith, former minister of social affairs.

It seems obvious that trying these Khmer Rouge officials is a good idea. After all, part of the lingering horror for Cambodians has been the inability to tell a history about precisely what happened to their country during one of the twentieth century's worst spasms of mass violence. At this late date, no trial could possibly address all their questions, but presumably average Cambodians would at least find catharsis in having *some* answers—and in seeing a token few of the perpetrators held accountable.

But what seems obvious in Cambodia often isn't. The more you know about the trials, the more reason there is to suspect that these proceedings will serve a purpose other than reckoning with the past. And, far from delivering justice to the Cambodian people, the trials may be paving the way for exactly the opposite.

What is at stake as the tribunal prepares to open isn't just the right to define Cambodia's past, but the right to control its future. And that future appears murky. On the one hand, decades after Pol Pot emptied Phnom Penh, the capital city is once again bustling. The old French colonial buildings, today used as government offices and luxury hotels, have fresh coats of yellow paint, and modern condo developments are rising on the city outskirts. Along the Mekong River's new pedestrian-friendly walkway, upscale restaurants and Internet cafés cater to an influx of university students, aid workers, and foreign tourists. Motorcycles are parked en masse on public squares. At night, a few of the fancier downtown homes even have cars parked on the ground level. For the past three years, the country has seen double-digit GDP growth, driven by urban construction, garment exports, and an onslaught of tourists, whose numbers are doubling every three years. (Angelina Jolie's turn in *Tomb Raider*, filmed among the country's ruins, has helped lure armies of sightseers.)

But, only a few miles outside the capital, the paved roads turn to dirt, the new gas stations are replaced by roadside stalls selling bootleg petrol in used Pepsi bottles, and the electric lines, if they exist, aren't very reliable. It's clear the wealth hasn't spread very far. Compared with other developing countries, Cambodia scores abominably low on a scale (used by the World Bank and others) that measures how much overall economic gains are helping the poor. The problem is inept governance, exacerbated by endemic corruption. Cambodia ranks near the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and a proposed anti-corruption law has been held up in the legislature for over a decade. "The country is like a motorcycle. If you want to drive fast, you need gas and a good engine," says Sok Hach, president of the Economic Institute of Cambodia, an independent research center in Phnom Penh. "We have the gas," by which he means money and natural resources. "But the engine is not so good."

The engine is currently in the hands of Hun Sen, Cambodia's prime minister. Hun Sen took power during the country's first multi-party elections in 1993 and has not relinquished it since. In 1997, he consolidated his grip by deposing his co–prime minister and rival, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Today, he is one of Asia's longest-serving leaders. On his watch, the country has been relatively peaceful, not something to take for granted given Cambodia's recent history. But, although foreign aid dollars and new investments are now flowing in, unemployment remains high, infrastructure lags behind neighboring countries, and the education system is derelict. "The political culture of corruption and impunity means that Cambodians are still among the world's poorest people," explains Simon Taylor, director of Global Witness, a Britain-based watchdog group that last year described Cambodia's ruling tier as a "kleptocratic elite."

Yet Hun Sen continues to win votes with two primary appeals: handouts to peasants come election season, and leveraging the horrors of the past. "The government likes to tell us that the status quo is better than what came before," says Hach. And that, more than anything else,

TRIBUTE

R. B. Kitaj (1932–2007)

Kitaj worked a miracle: he made culture into art. Usually the metamorphosis moves the other way, as art is demoted into culture, so as to annul its explosive energies and prepare it for the perdition of the market. Kitaj pressed the dialectic of art and culture all the way to its conclusion: he extracted art that was imprisoned within culture, liberated it, refreshed its force, returned it to use. He was a modernist who never felt the burden of the past. The past made Kitaj free, even wild. He loved the chain, and wanted only his own place within it. He was stimulated by traditions the way other painters were stimulated by mountains and by seas, with the same enlivening sensation of immensity. The ferocity of his observation of paintings—in his hot yellow studio by the pool you felt as if you were housed in a colossal art book—used to remind me of the stories of his beloved Cézanne sitting before his easel for hours in the sun and looking. As for books, they were for Kitaj what cherries were for Chardin and bottles were for Morandi: the most elementary inspirations for perception and figuration. He depicted writers and scholars as brazenly as Goya depicted women. (A friend of this magazine, he published some of these portraits in our pages.) I once heard him remark that he hated flowers, unaware that he was echoing an ancient rabbinical warning against being seduced away from study by an impression of nature, but the quotations in his pictures quiver gorgeously like Redon's petals, the testimonies of a profound arousal.

References, references, references: they are the terms of Kitaj's originality. They lead to the essence, not away from it. "Jews may write into their pictures as well," he proclaimed in his last book, "like a Talmud page." Kitaj wrote paintings; or better, he drew his Talmud page—the Piazzetta of the Jews!—and painted it, too. The "literariness" that some people deplored in his pictures—it is so outrageous, now, to have intellectual expectations of art—never constrained or distracted his astounding hand. Kitaj's mastery

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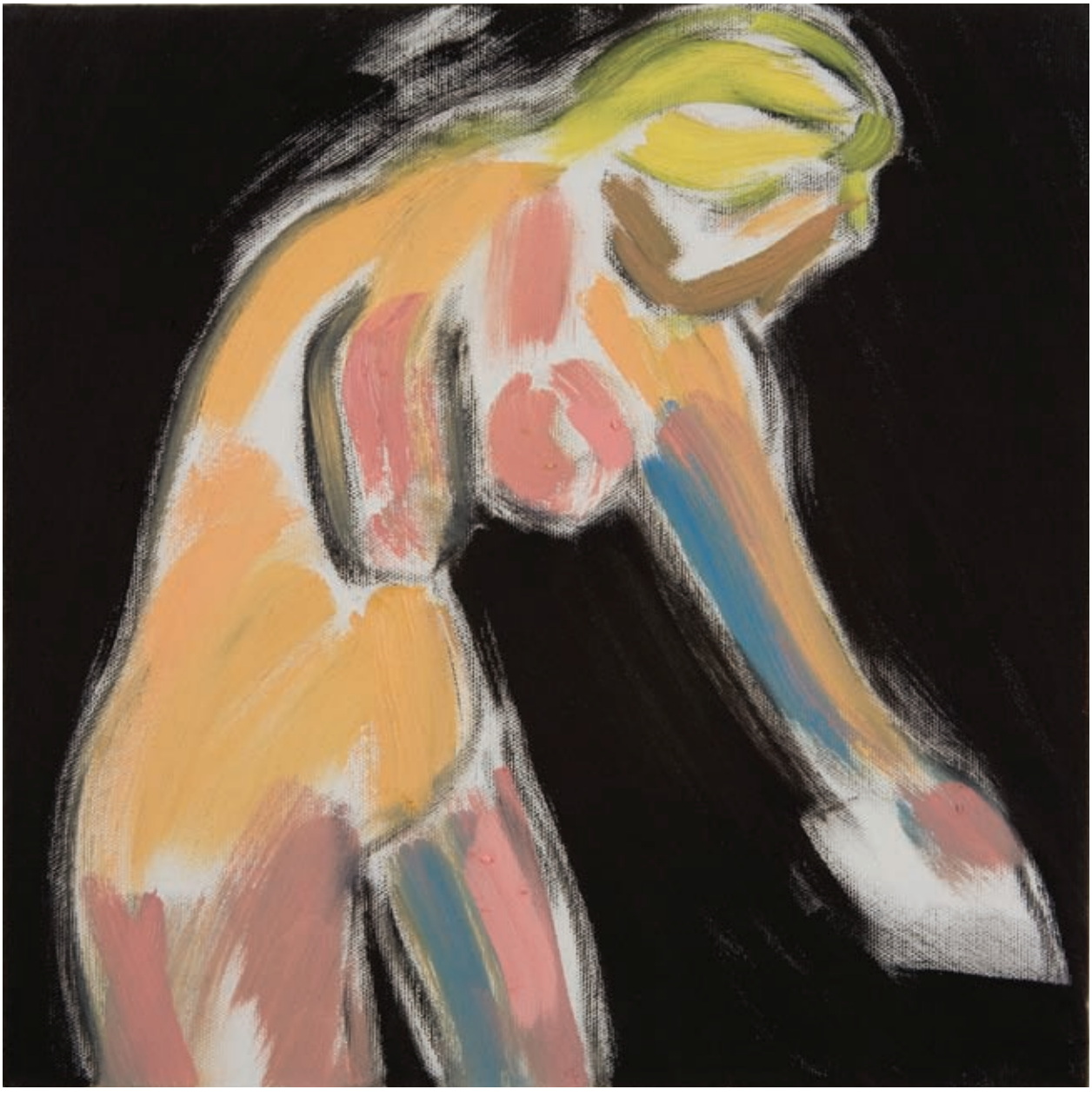

always exceeded his eccentricity. And his eccentricity was owed chiefly to his purity. (There are such things.) He was defiantly, almost pornographically unironic, and completely unrelenting about the seriousness of his intentions. In his later years this sometimes made him seem childlike, or monkish—as if he had come out the other side of civilization, where he could enjoy his flamboyant visions without any peril of primitivism. "Depart this world still studying, mainly Art and Jews." At this he succeeded. "Depart this world with few traces." At this he failed. He could not delete the plenitude of his traces, or control the fate of what he made; and there were more meanings and pleasures in his bounty than he knew. That is how all true artists fail—they stop being what they are and become what we need them to be; and that is how they bequeath to us some of the conditions of our spiritual success.

LEON WIESELTIER

"The Letter" (above) and "My Father" (left) are on exhibit at the Marlborough Gallery in New York through May 3. A full slide show is online at tnr.com.

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WHO'S CASHING IN THIS WEEK?

Rep. Al Wynn

This spring, the fourth district of Maryland will hold a special election to fill the seat of retiring Representative Al Wynn. In the long history of the House, there have been many reasons that states have footed the expensive bill, as much as $2 million in this instance, for such rushed voting: deaths, indictments, sudden illness. But this special election is, well, special. That's because Wynn has raced to retire so that he can start his lobbying career as soon as possible. By vacating his seat in June, rather than January, he will be eligible to lobby six months sooner under House ethics rules. That means six extra months of cajoling his ex-colleagues to support the same sort of nefarious causes that were Wynn's hallmark in the House—estate-tax repeal, corporate-friendly bankruptcy reform, the Bush energy bill. His exit, in other words, is as classy as the rest of his career.

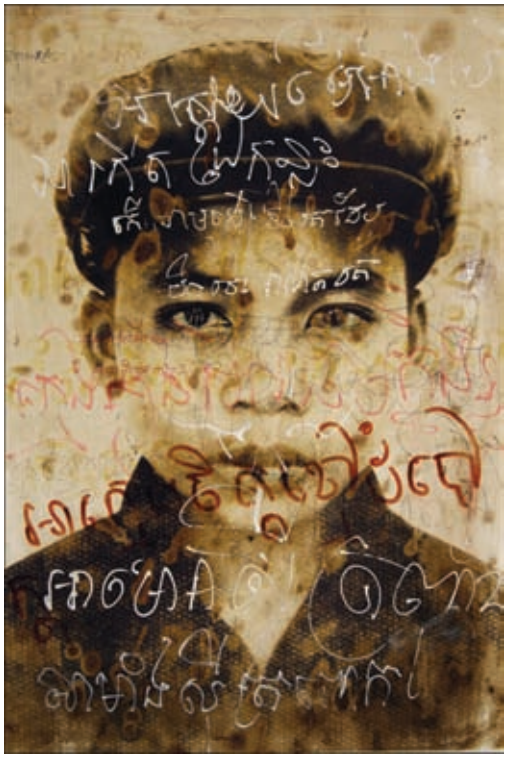
Dayo Olopade

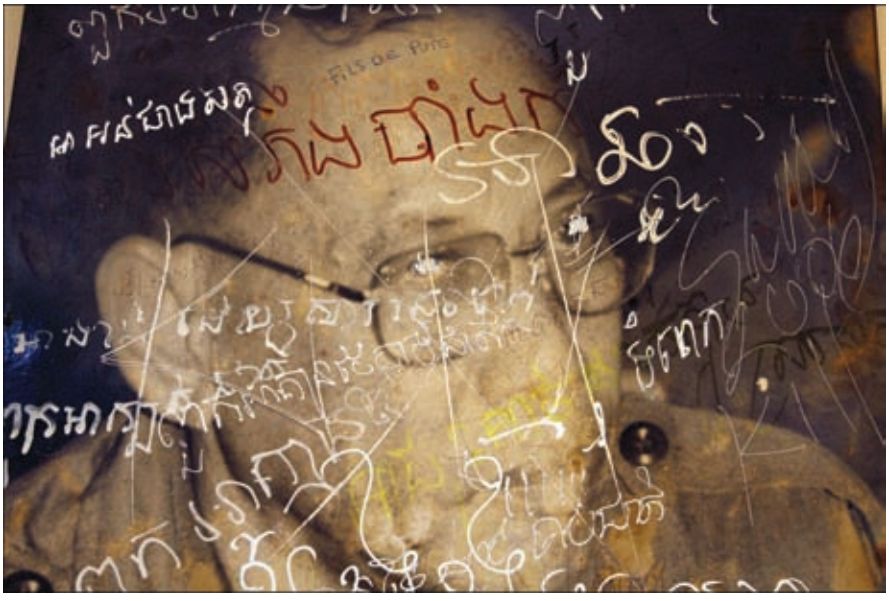
explains why the government has lately been eager to hold these trials. "It's brilliant politics," says Theary Seng, executive director of Cambodia's Center for Social Development, an independent group that monitors the courts and human rights. "Not only is the government able to whitewash officials' personal histories"—Hun Sen was himself a Khmer Rouge soldier—"but they get to be known across the country, and throughout world history, as the triers of the Khmer Rouge." We were sitting in a conference room of the Raffles Hotel, an old colonial structure refurbished with embarrassing splendor in Phnom Penh. "In the history books, that's all that will be said: 'This Cambodian People's Party, led by Hun Sen, tried the Khmer Rouge.'"

It is probably no coincidence that the trials are moving forward now—just in time for the July elections, when voters will decide whether to keep Hun Sen in office. At least one of the five officials will probably have been tried by then, predicts Ngoun Serath of the Club of Cambodian Journalists. "That," he tells me, "will be something to brag about."

The tribunal is particularly important to Hun Sen's political strategy because, these days, demography is working against him. Seventy percent of Cambodians are under the age of 30, meaning they do not personally remember the Khmer Rouge. Hence the need for visceral reminders of the past, if the ruling party is to cling to power. Clearly, Hun Sen is hoping the tribunal will do the trick.

Every year, for a two-week period known as Pchum Ben (or Festival of the Dead), Cambodians honor their ancestors, including those who died under Pol Pot. On the final day of the festival last October, at a temple near the center of Phnom Penh, I met Ly Setha, a 31-year-old government aide. He was kneeling on the steps outside the pagoda, retying his shoes, incense wafting through the doors. Like most Cambodians, he had lost a close relative during the reign of the





ROLLCALLPIX/NEWSCOM (WYNN); GAMMA/EYEDEAL/ZUMA PRESS (CAMBODIA)

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Khmer Rouge—his father. And, like many, he was too young to remember. In his mother's stories, which are all he knows, his father fought "valiantly," three-to-one against the soldiers who came to take him away; they hung his severed head in a tree, an ornament of intimidation. An infant at the time, Setha says he will never know what truly happened. His only recollections are ill-defined, the shards of an illogical dream. "I am sad," he told me, "but not because I remember being hurt."

That evening, Setha gave me a tour of the city by motorbike. We zipped past the congressional buildings and the king's palace lit up at night, then down the new commercial drag along the Mekong. Eventually, we stopped at one of the recently opened coffee shops. Inside, twentysomethings sipped dark roasts and stared at the big-screen television. Setha soon became engrossed in the wrestling show "Smackdown," as I ordered a cup of tea. I asked why the menu was printed in Khmer and English. He explained that American phrases had a certain cachet, as young Cambodians now study English in school. They are also increasingly Internet-savvy and attuned to such international phenomena as World Wrestling Entertainment and the U.S. presidential election. After his brief stint as a Buddhist monk—"I thought my head would explode," he said, "to stand still while the world moved by"—Setha went to business school, then got a job as an aide to the chairman of a government anti-corruption commission. He carries English-language newspapers under the seat of his motorbike and methodically quizzed me on American politics. He is a fervent supporter of the main opposition party.

Although Hun Sen's backing remains strong in the countryside, and his Cambodian People's Party (CCP) is expected to win the next elections handily, support is fading among Setha's cohort. "What we remember and what we want is different than our parents," he said. He supports the opposition more out of desire for change than because of specific policies. "Elections in Cambodia are very elemental," says Chiv You Meng, president of the Khmer Youth Association, an organization that conducts get-out-the-vote efforts and lobbies against corruption. "It's a choice between systems, voting for democracy or for the old ways. Many young people believe that CCP is comprised of individuals who represent the old ways."

Cambodia today is at a crossroads. With improved governance it could develop the way of Malaysia, a relatively stable country with a growing economy. Or it could go the way of Indonesia, where a corrupt elite hoarded wealth, allowing resentment to fester until the country erupted in violence and the government was finally toppled. With the recent discovery of Cambodia's offshore oil, expected to come online as early as 2009, the stakes are even higher, as greater resources will soon be available—either to benefit the population at large or to grease the wheels of corruption, sharpening the divide between rich and poor. Of course, the longer Hun Sen retains his solid grip on power, the worse the prognosis. And so the Khmer Rouge trials, to the extent that they're good news for him, may end up being bad news for the rest of Cambodia.

CHRISTINA LARSON

An estimated 1.5 million Cambodians died during Pol Pot's brutal four-year rule. To the left and below, three Cambodians who served the Khmer Rouge, their photos covered in graffiti.

Christina Larson is a contributing editor at THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY. Her research in Cambodia was supported by a journalism fellowship from the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

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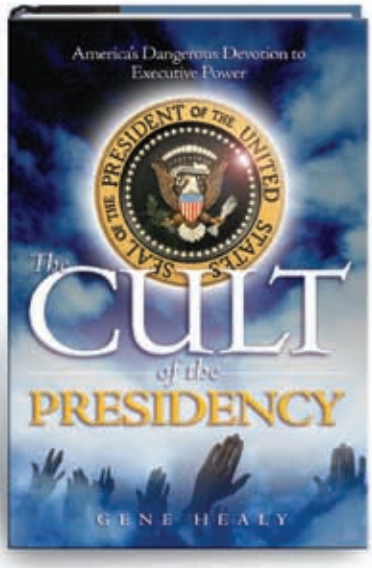

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Hillary Clinton, Ray Chavez/Oakland Tribune/ZUMA Press; Chelsea Clinton, AP Photo/Nick Ut; Howard Wolfson, Chris Hondros/Newsmakers; James Carville, AP Photo/Suzanne Plunkett; Harold Ickes, AFP Photo/Joyce Naltchayan; Maggie Williams, AFP Photo; Mark Penn, Win McNamee/Getty Images; Bill Clinton, Matthew Williams/ZUMA Press

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Voices in Her Head

Inside Hillaryland's fatal psychodrama.

MICHELLE COTTLE

By the time Hillary Clinton's campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle finally packed up her lovely corner office with its fresh blue carpet and mini-fridge full of Diet Coke, her exit must have come as a relief—even to many of her friends on Team Hillary. Since Iowa, colleagues had been conducting an uneasy deathwatch for her. New faces had begun popping up around Ballston (as Hillary HQ is called in honor of its suburban Virginia neighborhood), most notably Maggie Williams, Hillary's chief of staff from her First Lady days. Initially, the campaign insisted that Williams was there merely to back up Solis Doyle, but, almost immediately, staffers began turning to Williams to solve problems and approve projects. When the inevitable strain of having two people atop the organizational chart became untenable, few questioned who would be the last woman standing. On February 10, the Sunday after Super Tuesday, Solis Doyle was officially out.

Leadership change brings disruption. And no one knows how to exploit disruption better than Mark Penn, the message master of Team Hillary. Long disdainful of Solis Doyle, Penn saw her departure as an opportunity to consolidate his authority, say insiders. He started hanging out in her old office, which had been transformed into a conference room, and taking over meetings and in-house e-mail chains she once handled (occasionally bumping up against similar efforts by Williams). At the same time, Penn's colleagues from Burson-Marsteller, the p.r. giant of which he is chief executive, became more visible around HQ. "I think, post-Patti, he only got stronger," says one in-house observer. Williams may have been the new chief, but Penn had his own ideas about how things should run.

Then came the news that Penn had attended a March 31 meeting with the Colombian ambassador to discuss his firm's role in promoting a free-trade agreement specifically opposed by Clinton. In addition to undermining Hillary's outreach to working-class Democrats, Penn's corporate moonlighting laid bare long-festering concerns about his split loyalties and perceived conflicts of interest. On April 6, less than two months after Solis Doyle's departure, Penn was relieved of *his* post as campaign architect. Once again, Team Hillary found itself trying to regain its equilibrium following an inner-circle loss.

Or perhaps not. Though Penn stepped down as chief strategist, he is still advising the operation. And, title or no, Penn is not a man who functions well as a team player. His sharp elbows, turf invasions, and control-freak tendencies are legendary and unlikely to be held in check, say current and former colleagues. Can his replacements—pollster Geoff Garin, who joined Team Hillary in March, and communications director Howard Wolfson—effectively defend their new turf with Penn still lurking? Don't bet on it.

Rife with big egos and competing centers of influence—veterans of Hillary's First Lady days, relative newbies from her Senate office, Bill's '92 people, Bill's '96 people—Team Hillary has never been a comfortably cohesive group. In happier times, discipline was easier to maintain. But, as this race has grown longer and rougher, the staff's nerves and relations have been badly strained by persistent financial troubles and constant turf wars, not to mention one increasingly unmanageable ex-president. Some days, it's hard to remember that, just six months ago, the campaign was regarded as a highly disciplined machine. More and more, it resembles an unruly rock band plagued by dysfunction and public infighting. From Williams's arrival to Solis Doyle's demise to Penn's ascent, fall, and return, the ebb and flow of power in Hillaryland over the past few months has left multiple people acting like they are in charge—and no one really in control.

The clash was classic Mark Penn. In the run-up to Hillary's February 25 foreign policy speech at George Washington University, her top strategist felt that the campaign's speechwriters, overseen by policy chief Neera Tanden, were headed in the wrong direction. Rather than sitting down to talk with them, Penn—renowned for his lack of interpersonal skills—struck out on his own, setting up a parallel speechwriting effort using outside scribes. Unfortunately for him, Tanden's shop learned of his end-run and was royally brassed off. Fingers were pointed and accusations hurled, prompting Maggie Williams to hold an emergency conference call on the Sunday night before the Monday speech. Among those assembled to confer with Penn, reports one witness, were Tanden, her speechwriting team, and foreign policy gurus Andrew Shapiro and Lee Feinstein. But, when asked by Tanden and Williams to explain his problem with the address, all Penn initially could do was repeat over and over, "This speech doesn't begin to meet the minimum standards of being acceptable." And, "If she delivers this speech, she will lose." Williams had to keep soothing Penn, prodding him to be specific about his objections, recalls the witness. Eventually, everyone had their say, and Tanden's people were sent off to work out the final details. A full-blown meltdown was averted. But Penn's relations with the rest of the campaign had suffered yet another blow.

It is no secret that Penn's colleagues, including most of the campaign's top advisers, have been rooting hard for his downfall for some time. Politically controversial and personally abrasive (he has a history of hurling cell phones, pagers, and Chinese takeout), Penn won few friends in the wake of Solis Doyle's departure. While many had been frustrated with Solis Doyle's leadership, there was also a sense that, if the campaign manager needed to go, so did the man behind the message. (Solis Doyle herself warned the candidate of this on her way out.) But, instead of lying low or reaching out to colleagues, Penn crashed ahead, publicly blaming the campaign's deficiencies on others, including Solis Doyle; her recently departed deputy, Mike Henry; and adviser Harold Ickes, a Penn nemesis dating back to the Clinton White House. For all his p.r. savvy, Penn has always been a disaster at managing his own image. (A former colleague chuckles about an episode from some years back when "60 Minutes"

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wanted to report on Penn's polling operation. Just as journalist Steve Kroft was scheduled to arrive, Penn freaked out and hid in someone else's office, forcing his staff to lie and claim that he had forgotten about the interview.) So it was perhaps predictable that Penn set about digging the hole deeper—most toxically with his insistence to the *Los Angeles Times* that he had "no direct authority in the campaign" and was merely "an outside message adviser with no campaign staff reporting to me." Such blatant buck-passing earned Penn only greater enmity from colleagues, ridicule from the chattering class, and outrage from donors, who started calling Ballston to ask why someone with so little authority was being paid so much. (News reports place the amount paid or owed to Penn's consulting firm in the millions.)

Considering that even Penn's strategic savvy has fallen into question of late, one might have assumed the Clintons would see his sit-down with the Colombian ambassador as the perfect excuse to ease him onto the sidelines. But, at this point, completely weaning themselves from Penn may not be an option for Hillary and Bill. For starters, Penn is a known and trusted quantity to a candidate for whom loyalty is a primary concern, and his work in the Clinton White House won him the respect and gratitude of a president said to be unimpressed with some of his wife's counselors. More practically, both pro- and anti-Penn observers suggest that a forced withdrawal by the strategist and his people (two of whom, Josh Gottheimer and Jano Cabrera, have already been shipped back to Burson) could leave a vacuum. "Who else over there is qualified to be chief strategist?" one of Penn's defenders demanded, just days before the adviser's fortunes went south.

Indeed, while there is no shortage of brainpower on Team Hillary, Penn has fought to enmesh himself as deeply as possible in the campaign. Tanden's speechwriting team is hardly the first group to face his meddling. Early on, Penn (unsuccessfully) lobbied for Burson to handle everything from designing the website to creating a new campaign logo. His ongoing battles with Mandy Grunwald over advertising and Howard Wolfson over communications are legendary, and even those operating outside his wheelhouse, such as Web guru Peter Daou, have had to fend off encroachments. Any efforts to shrink Penn's own portfolio, meanwhile, have been met with fierce resistance. Take, for instance, the Direct Mail Melodrama: For Hillary's 2006 Senate race, Michael Berland of Penn, Schoen & Berland (PSB, the polling firm he co-founded in 1975, now a subsidiary of Burson-Marsteller) oversaw all direct mail. But Berland and Penn parted ways in December 2006, with Penn subsequently suing his ex-partner for allegedly violating a non-compete agreement. (The suit was settled last July.) With Berland out of the picture this time around, the campaign found PSB's early direct-mail efforts in Iowa unsatisfactory, so HQ moved to bring in direct-mail veteran Hal Malchow. But Penn balked, bad-mouthing the competition and threatening to quit the campaign if direct mail was taken from his control. Finally, when it looked as though he might lose the fight, Penn moved to bring Berland back into the fold. Under those conditions, the campaign relented: Malchow was allowed to continue the Iowa mailings—under Penn's oversight as chief strategist, of course—but, afterward, direct mail was returned to PSB. One insider describes the cajoling required to resolve the matter as "very painful." But, at the end of the day, Penn held tight to the campaign's direct-mail business—making it that much harder for the Clintons to dislodge him now.

And Penn hanging around in an ambiguous role can mean only one thing: no let-up in the internecine intrigue. Relations between Penn and Wolfson can most politely be characterized as fraught, while Garin, who has never worked closely with either Clinton, is a newcomer to the inner circle. For all his interpersonal deficiencies, Penn is said to be a master at organizational politics. "Penn is very good at holding onto power and staying in the inner circle," explains one strategist who has worked with him. Observers say Penn is a shrewd "courtier" who "manages the client" with considerable care. As former mentor Dick Morris puts it, "Penn is obsequious to those above him, competitive with his peers, and tyrannical to anybody below him." During his days in the Clinton White House, Penn prepared a weekly strategy memo to be distributed to the president and senior staff at the Wednesday political meetings. But Penn always made sure the president's copy had an extra two or three pages attached, addressing some private questions Clinton had posed and outlining what Penn saw as the most pressing issues. According to a close colleague from that time, the extra material was always along the lines of "I understand these are the sort of issues people are talking about but, for whatever reason, you need to know this, this, this—and *this* is really the right way to go."

What's more, being The Man With The Data gives Penn a formidable edge in any debate over strategy. It is almost impossible to argue Penn down, say colleagues, because he brandishes his polling data like a weapon. And so, his fellow advisers explain, in the eternal debate over whether to keep the message focused on Hillary's strength and readiness or to try and humanize her, Penn would simply whip out data showing that "readiness" was the way to go. When anyone argued against going negative on Obama, Penn would point to more numbers.

In his quest to maximize his influence with the principal, colleagues say Penn is constantly on alert for signs that an adversary (meaning anyone else advising the candidate) is ripe for knee-capping. "Mark is a *huge* political animal," recalls a former PSB employee (and semi-defender). "When he senses the fact that somebody's out of favor with the candidate and the candidate is not really listening to their advice, Mark will step in and try to fully take over that piece of the campaign." For instance, in February 2007, when the campaign was criticized for its aggressive response to Clinton-cum-Obama backer David Geffen's unflattering remarks about Hillary, communications director Howard Wolfson bore the brunt of the blame internally. It was a situation Penn actively encouraged, say insiders, despite his having played an equally aggressive role in the response—or perhaps because of it.

A troublesome chief strategist might be expected to cast the longest shadow across an ordinary campaign. But, for Team Hillary, there is always Bill. Campaign insiders acknowledge that the former president has never been wholly manageable—despite the best efforts of some longtime Hillarylanders (who see this as *their* turn to shine, dammit!). As one adviser observes, "You can question him, but you can't ever tell him what to do." Most notable, of course, are the public outbursts. Team Hillary members, for instance, are quick to stress that Bill was *completely* off the reservation with

ANTHONY RUSSO

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his toxic remarks in South Carolina. More recently, the former president horrified a private meeting of California superdelegates by reportedly going on a red-faced, wide-ranging rant after a *Hillary* supporter voiced her distress that James Carville had compared Governor Bill Richardson to Judas for endorsing Obama. And the president's repeated attempts to defend Hillary's misstatements regarding her 1996 trip to Bosnia have been so bumbling that even he has publicly admitted his wife gave him a talking-to about keeping his yap shut on the matter.

But public pronouncements are only a fragment of the picture. As Hillary's campaign struggles, an obviously frustrated Bill and "his people" have taken a greater hand in operations. Immediately post-Iowa, veteran Clintonites like Steve Richetti, Doug Sosnik, and Roy Spence became major players. The president himself announced that he needed an office and would be coming in every day to make phone calls and get "involved." He settled into the space originally shared by Penn and Grunwald (Penn has since taken over "the old kitchen," which is where much of his staff set up camp) and began attending meetings, sitting in on calls, and just generally hanging around. As one insider notes, "Obviously, it's very noticeable when he is there, because there is Secret Service everywhere." Many around Ballston saw the situation as disruptive and unsustainable, and there was a collective sigh of relief when, after a short while, Bill's heavy campaigning schedule took him back out on the road.

In the meantime, out went Solis Doyle—never highly regarded by Bill's crew—and in came Williams, who, though a loyal Hillarylander, also has a close and mutually respectful relationship with the former president. Bill's influence waxed further, say insiders, as Williams brought in her team, which included a number of folks considered as much "his people" as Hillary's. Former Clinton Deputy White House Counsel Cheryl Mills, the campaign's general counsel, became heavily involved in setting up meetings, organizing staff, and generally "playing more of a chief-of-staff role for Maggie," say insiders. Craig T. Smith, a Clinton White House political director (whose history with Bill goes back to Clinton's gubernatorial days) was brought on to advise on political matters, and Howard Paster, a veteran Bill adviser (and key liaison with Congress and organized labor), moved from informal counseling to overseeing operations and budgets. More casually, old White House communications hands like Jim Kennedy, spinmeister during the impeachment saga, and Don Baer, a former speechwriter and communications director now working with Penn at Burson, were seen buzzing about HQ. For her part, Williams raised a few eyebrows when she set up shop on the largely unpopulated third floor of Ballston (common rooms, staff offices, and the War Room are all up on four) alongside Tina Flournoy, assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers and deputy campaign manager for Bill Clinton's 1996 reelection, as well as Laura Graham, Bill's chief of staff. None of which may mean much by itself, but all of which has fed the perception that Bill remains ascendant. In the eyes of some insiders, he and "his people" have achieved at least a partial "takeover."

A campaign's "layering" on of reinforcements, as Team Hillary calls its staff adjustments, has both obvious advantages and significant drawbacks—starting with the fact that some of these folks distrust, disdain, or even flat-out despise each other. Howard Paster is said to be resented by some of Bill's people, not to mention some of the staffers he has been "layered over." (Bizarrely, after originally tapping him as incoming COO in charge of, among other things, budgets and consultant contracts, the campaign is now downplaying Paster's arrival and insisting that he will only be generically helping out.) Some of the more devout Hillarylanders regard Bill's people with contempt, and vice versa. Williams is viewed with unease by many remaining Solis Doyle loyalists. Some younger campaign hands simply don't know what to make of old-guard Hillarylanders, like Melanne Verveer and Evelyn Lieberman, who drift through now and again. And, of course, everyone hates Penn. In recent weeks, with Williams busy folding fresh recruits into the team and re-prioritizing operations, with Penn orchestrating his power grab and then enduring his own mini-scandal, and with Bill making public waves as well as welcoming more of his people into the heart of the battle, it's a wonder Hillary could keep a grip on her message at all. Echoing multiple colleagues, one campaign adviser ruefully acknowledges that the candidate's successes have come "despite Ballston, not because of it."

At the same time, lower down the food chain, the campaign continues to suffer regular defections, as exhausted, dispirited staffers take their leave. In addition to high-profile resignations by deputy campaign manager Mike Henry and director of operations Jessica O'Connell, lesser-known hands have been trickling out as well. Recent departures included Carolyn Hahn, director of correspondence; Sasha Bruce, Jason Houser, and Alea Brown from Guy Cecil's political shop; Crystal Patterson and Kevin Thurman from the Web team; and Hailey Arends, Matt McQueeney, and Lauren Fitterman from Compliance and Accounting. As they head out the door, refugees say they're fielding numerous calls from other folks thinking of following them. People complain that the chains of command are too fuzzy, with incoming advisers not so much rejuvenating certain operations as setting up parallel systems or further complicating old ones with new (at times conflicting) layers of bureaucracy. One particular pocket of frustration is said to be the finance department, which has been feeling neglected of late. Staffers there have vented to friends about not being able to get a meeting with Williams and about her failure to check in for updates and projections—hardly a promising situation for a campaign with money troubles. More broadly, multiple insiders say Williams is often nowhere to be seen around the office, and the campaign manager's habit of taking off Fridays to travel back to Rhode Island (where she lives) and New York (where her consulting firm does much of its business) rubs many the wrong way. The hope now is that Paster's late-March promotion will improve the situation and stem further losses. Although, notes one adviser, at this point it seems a dubious p.r. move to have budget matters handled by Paster, who is executive vice president of WPP Group, parent company of both Burson and Dewey Square, one of the campaign's major vendors.

And so the jockeying and layering and squabbling grinds on, even as Hillary's chances of capturing the nomination grow ever more remote. From the outside, the struggle for control of a campaign that likely won't be around much longer may appear absurd. In Ballston, however, the sense of looming loss seems only to feed the fury, as advisers grab for what may be their last chance to right the ship. Whether driven on by dedication, desperation, or delusion, some of Hillary's not-so-happy warriors find themselves unable to give up the fight—not just against Barack Obama, but also against each other. ◆

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Sunset in America

The end of the age of Reagan.

SEAN WILENTZ

On May 3, 2007, ten aspirants to the Republican presidential nomination kicked off the long campaign with a debate at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California. The candidates disagreed about the issues and their respective qualifications—but each claimed Reagan's mantle.

"I think it's important to remember," said Mike Huckabee, "that what Ronald Reagan did was to give us a vision for this country, a morning in America, a city on a hill." John McCain talked about Reagan's fiscal austerity: "Ronald Reagan used to say we spend money like a drunken sailor." Tommy Thompson threw in a stilted but apposite observation: "We forgot to be coming up with new ideas, big ideas like Ronald Reagan."

Given the venue—and with Nancy Reagan in the front row—the candidates were being polite. They were also being sincere. Chiefly, though, they wanted to gain legitimacy with Republican factions that believed their politics were unsound. Tellingly, the candidates only once mentioned George W. Bush, who, until his popularity collapsed during his second term, had been touted within the party as a born-again Reagan. Instead, they all looked backward, beckoning to the restoration of a conservatism that had somehow lost its way.

What some experts envisaged, only three years ago, as a permanent Republican majority now looks like an illusion. The Democrats, despite their internecine battles over the presidency, remain in a potentially strong position and ought to win substantial majorities in both the House and Senate. Having claimed his party's nomination, John McCain must persuade many on the right that his campaign will not, as the radio polemicist Rush Limbaugh has predicted, "destroy" the Republican Party. As his remedial actions demonstrate, McCain cannot count simply on reassembling, yet again, the old Reagan coalition. "It's gone," Ed Rollins, Reagan's White House political director, has said. "It doesn't mean a whole lot to people anymore."

If Rollins is correct, we have reached the end of an extraordinary era in American history. After Barry Goldwater's crushing defeat in 1964, the conventional wisdom held that a liberal consensus thoroughly controlled American politics. That consensus began to unravel in the late '60s, but it was by no means obvious that the right wing of the Republican Party would replace it. Even after Reagan won the presidency, many commentators regarded him as a fluke. David Broder of *The Washington Post* wrote off Reaganism early in 1983 as a "one-year phenomenon" and declared that the Reagan administration had reached its "phase-out."

Yet, by 2008, the surge of conservative politics that Reagan personified had survived brief interruption and temporary reversal and, like it or not, defined an entire political era—an era longer than that of either Thomas Jefferson or Andrew Jackson, longer than the Gilded Age or the Progressive Era, and as long as the period of liberal reform that stretched from the rise of the New Deal to the demise of the Great Society.

Any periodization of history is, of course, arbitrary and debatable. And, to be sure, the age of Reagan—the most sustained conservative political era in American history—does not, at a glance, seem as significant as other major periods. Reagan fell far short of eradicating either Franklin Roosevelt's revolution in government or the reforms of the 1960s. Contrary to the heroic portrait painted by his admirers (and, more recently, by some liberals with second thoughts), his presidency either caused or indulged enormous damage, ranging from the savings and loan catastrophe to the Iran-Contra affair. His success owed as much to continued confusion and division among Democrats as it did to his own strength.

Still, like Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt, Reagan took over a political order in crisis, powerfully pronounced the principles of a new order, and, on some crucial issues, bent the nation to his will. He took ideas that had once been relegated to the ideological margins and carried them into the very core of American politics. By hastening the end of the cold war and altering some of the basic instruments of liberal reform (above all the federal courts and progressive taxation), the Reagan era changed the sum and substance of government at home and abroad. Given the era's longevity, the question is when and why it ran out of steam.

All history is shaped by the unexpected—yet, to an unusual degree, contingency has altered American politics since 1960. If not for the assassination in Dallas, a liberal age of Kennedy might have dawned. Without Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson could well have emerged as the overshadowing figure of the '60s. Had the crimes of Watergate been left unexposed, the '70s and after might belong to the age of Nixon. Instead, out of crises that upended both parties, Ronald Reagan and the right came to power.

The Democrats never fully recovered from their divisions over Vietnam. Likewise, the Republican establishment never fully recovered from Watergate, another unexpected consequence of Vietnam. Overwhelming Democratic victories in the midterm elections of 1974, followed by Jimmy Carter's election two years later, seemed to inaugurate a rebirth of the liberal consensus. But it was a mirage. Carter's blend of high-minded morality and Southern Progressivism alienated him from the party's left wing, which in turn hampered his efforts to rescue a failing economy. Finally, Carter's inability to master world events—particularly the breakdown of cold war realpolitik in Iran, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan—doomed his administration.

Reagan and the Republican right did not, to be sure, win the presidency by default. Adding newly organized evangelical Christians to his coalition consolidated the Solid South. A plethora of right-wing think tanks rejuvenated or founded in the '70s gave Reaganism an aura of innovation. By placing on his ticket, in 1980, the man whom he had defeated in the primaries, George H.W. Bush, Reagan astutely completed a merger of the Republican right with the old battered establishment.

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Reagan did not then proceed quickly to unite the American people behind him. At different points—when he survived his shooting by John Hinckley Jr. in 1981, when the economy recovered from the so-called Reagan recession in 1983, and after he embraced Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987—Reagan's public standing soared. But Reagan's average performance ratings in office rank only in the middle tier among modern presidents, on par with Bill Clinton's and below John F. Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Reagan was also a divider, not a uniter. Based on the polling data, the gap between how Republicans and Democrats viewed him dwarfs that of his successor, the unheroic one-termer George H.W. Bush.

Reagan did have a knack, though, for peaking when it counted: during his reelection year in 1984 and in his final year in office. He also proved a shrewd operator regarding the two issues he cared about most—taxes and the cold war. His two major tax cuts, in 1981 and 1986, redistributed wealth upward to the already wealthy and sent deficits soaring. He ultimately secured his chief objective, which was to skew the progressive tax system. It is almost impossible to imagine the top marginal rate on personal income ever climbing back up to 70 percent (the figure when Reagan was elected). That change alone has dramatically curtailed the possibilities for liberal government.

In foreign affairs, the aggressive so-called Reagan Doctrine, actively supporting anti-communist insurgencies and governments around the globe, became, in some of his admirers' mistaken view, the key to Reagan's success. In fact, the doctrine won minor triumphs in places like Grenada, put enormous pressure on the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan (while arming Islamist radicals), caused a bloodbath in Central America, ran aground in Lebanon, and finally led to a severe constitutional confrontation with the Iran-Contra affair. Yet Reagan was also able to look beyond the right-wing vision, recognize Gorbachev as a genuine reformer, and launch the reversal of U.S.-Soviet tensions that ended the cold war.

Reagan's performance in other areas was mixed. Although he left the economy in far better shape than he found it, the draconian anti-inflation policies of his Federal Reserve chairman, Paul Volcker, as well as declining oil prices in the mid-'80s, deserve most of the credit. On the social and cultural issues dear to the religious right—from abortion to prayer in public schools—the administration delivered mainly lip service. The pro-business Reagan revolution hastened the decline of organized labor (and contributed to declines in real hourly wages), but it failed to reduce the size of the federal government; and its signal successes in deregulation and indifference to oversight contributed to various scandals (among them the looting of the Department of Housing and Urban Development). Aside from taxation and foreign policy, his most substantial legacies were stocking the courts with like-minded young conservatives and turning old right-wing nostrums like trickle-down economics into something approaching the conventional wisdom, at least within the Republican Party.

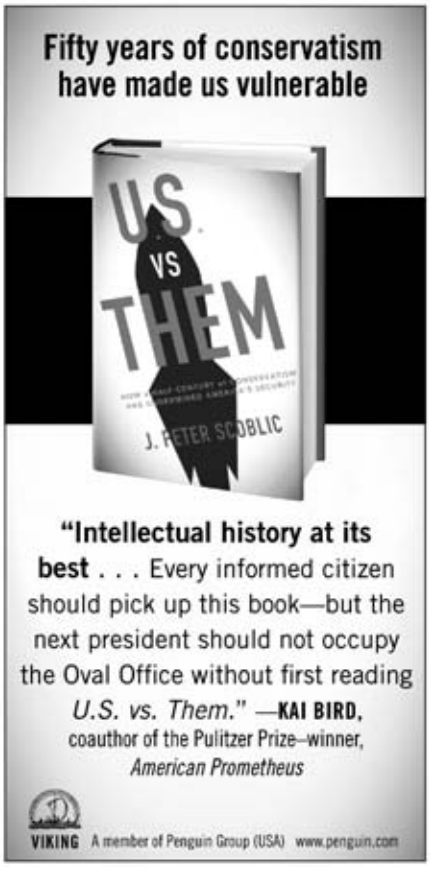
The chief political problem for the Reagan Republicans in advancing Reagan's policies after 1988 was his successor. The party turned to Reagan's loyal vice president, George H.W. Bush, the old establishment favorite, who had moved rightward on issues ranging from taxes to gun control. If the Democrats had found a convincing way to cohere as more than a collection of interest groups, it is possible the Republican ascendancy might have ended in 1988. But, after long experience as a congressional party—where distinct interests became entrenched—the Democrats nominated a colorless liberal, Michael Dukakis. After enjoying a large lead in the polls after his convention, Dukakis insisted on stressing his "competence" but declined to combat ferocious attacks. Most importantly, Reagan's rising popularity, wrought after Iran-Contra and during his partnership with Gorbachev, helped lift his vice president into the White House. The age of Reagan would continue. Yet its unraveling had begun.

Both of Reagan's successors tried, from different sides of the political spectrum, to foster renewed moderation. Both were hampered by the costs of Reagan's stewardship, as well as by the political furies from the left and the right, still galvanized by the crises from the 1960s and '70s.

George H.W. Bush faced the task of bringing the cold war to a close in a detached, realist fashion very different from Reagan's—yet he completed what Reagan had started. His major foreign policy triumphs—helping to achieve the reunification of Germany and assembling an international coalition to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—could not have succeeded without the personal working relationship he carefully built with Gorbachev. Public reaction to the Gulf war victory pushed Bush's approval figures to historic new heights.

But, on domestic matters, Bush found himself pilloried from the right. He might have foreseen the attacks as early as his nomination acceptance speech, when, alongside a tough-guy pledge not to raise taxes, he promised to offer a "kinder and gentler" America. ("Kinder and gentler than *who*?" Nancy Reagan is reported to have asked.) The Reagan years left behind not only a growing debt but additional costs from the savings and loan crisis that Reagan's zealous deregulation policies had precipitated. Faced with an intransigent Democratic Congress, Bush bowed to reality and raised taxes, immediately and forever persuading some Reaganites that he was a secret liberal. Bush's attempts to placate the right—by nominating Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court and by allowing Pat Buchanan to deliver a hair-raising culture wars opening-night speech at his re-nomination convention—alienated independents without fully winning over the right.

The bizarre third-party candidacy of Texas billionaire Ross Perot in 1992 showed how Bush had lost the popular confidence many had placed in Reagan. Perot, who got his political start supporting Nixon, was also a product of the age of Reagan—presenting himself as a no-nonsense businessman pitted against Washington insiders, playing up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a twangy Texas populism that Bush imitated unconvincingly.

Political analysts disagree about whether Perot's candidacy did more harm to Bush or to the Democrat who defeated him, Bill Clinton. But the fact that Perot won 19 percent of the vote exposed the volatility of the electorate and an abiding alienation from politics—alienation which had first helped elect Jimmy Carter, but by now had gone haywire. The fractured vote augured poorly for a recreation of the political center.

Clinton offered the Democrats hope of reuniting the party's left wing and its traditional working- and middle-class base. But, before Clinton's inauguration, news that the Bush budget deficits—the lingering ills of Reaganomics—would be even larger than predicted helped persuade him that he would have to shelve the middle-class tax cut he had promised in favor of deficit reduction. Clinton's shift dismayed some liberals, which portended a renewal of old intramural fights among the Democrats. Only in time did it become clear that Clinton's policies were the foundation of the '90s boom, which lowered poverty rates and raised earnings in all income groups and across racial lines.

Clinton continually contended with the left wing of his own party as well as right-wing Republicans—and with his own personal demons. The failure of his health care initiative in 1994 capped nearly 18 months of missteps. Compounding Clinton's woes, left-wing Democrats and labor unions, already disturbed by his conversion to deficit reduction, rebelled at his support of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The recapture of the House by the Republicans in 1994 forced Clinton to adjust and adopt more measured and sometimes defensive tactics.

Clinton recouped by occupying the political ground between the right-wing hotspurs and the doctrinaire left. He seized Republican rhetoric about family values and filled it with his own liberal politics—a co-optation that the left would misunderstand and disparage as cynical "triangulation." Even worse, in liberals' eyes, Clinton signed a welfare-reform bill that he himself thought too punitive in some respects (and that he would later help ameliorate), believing it would be his only opportunity to overhaul what had become a degrading, divisive, and self-defeating welfare system.

On his right, Clinton faced a Republican Congress so dominated by its ideologues that even Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, one of the surviving traditional Republicans, grudgingly went along with the hard-right agenda. Yet Clinton outfoxed Republicans in battles over the budget that led to two government shutdowns. Instead of the Republicans forcing Clinton to capitulate to their demand to slash Medicare and cut taxes, the president held steady, and the public blamed Congress. And, when right-wing terrorists bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City, Clinton regained the initiative by effectively denouncing the anti-government mood being stoked by the Republican right.

Clinton's comeback and his reelection seemed, at last, to establish a shaky political center—but his second term, and the election of his successor, saw that center collapse. This collapse insured that, despite Clinton's many successes, his presidency would belong to the age of Reagan. First, right-wing Republicans refused to accept the legitimacy of his reelection—House Majority Leader Dick Armey, for one, referred to Clinton as "your president"—and stepped up their efforts to destroy him. The discovery by right-wing operatives that Clinton had had a series of trysts with a young White House worker gave them the opportunity to set in motion the events that would lead to Clinton's impeachment. In Washington, and in the formally liberal metropolitan press, mounting fury at Clinton fed the impression that the right was in the saddle once again. Yet the partisan impeachment fight was profoundly unpopular with the public, and it brought back to Clinton even left-wing Democrats (including in the intelligentsia) who had regarded him as a betrayer of liberal principles.

With Clinton's popularity soaring, it looked as if 2000 would bring a solid Democratic victory. But nothing went right for the Democrats. Al Gore, who believed that scandal made Clinton a liability, distanced himself from the very administration he had served so well. Bush, a cipher to most, ran as a "compassionate conservative" who would uphold Reaganite principles but in the kinder, gentler mode of his father. The press gave credence to a string of bogus scandals and cast Gore as a privileged, self-regarding dissembler. The left retreated into its discontent with Clinton's politics of feint and maneuver and rallied to the protest candidacy of Ralph Nader. Like Dukakis, Gore failed to defend himself from the relentless Republican attacks. Thanks to Nader, and to the intervention of four Reagan-era appointees on the Supreme Court and the man Reagan named chief justice, George W. Bush became president. Clinton's precarious center had not held.

Contrary to what his campaign seemed to promise in 2000, Bush has governed as a radical, taking Reaganite ideas to their logical conclusion and beyond. Except for the shocking attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush might not have garnered the patriotic backing that earned him public approval that, in the short run, exceeded what his father enjoyed after the Gulf war and later remained just high enough to win him a second term. Over the painful years since then, his manifest failures have led him to suffer through the longest run of public disapproval yet recorded for any president.

Repeatedly, the Bush administration has exposed the exhaustion of Reaganism. The debacle in Iraq has challenged conservatives' claims to superior wisdom in foreign and military affairs, which for decades has been their prime claim to competence. The turn to regressive tax cuts has helped create monster deficits. Other disasters, above all the government's handling of Hurricane Katrina, exposed the dark consequences of small-government dogma. The Terri Schiavo affair, as well as some spectacular sex scandals, galvanized the public's revulsion at the hypocrisy of the religious right. The uncovering of massive corruption at the party's highest levels, notably in the Jack Abramoff case, prompted even Republicans to wonder if the GOP had been in power too long.

With the Bush legacy now tarnished, there was no dynastic succession that could hold together the disparate elements of the old Reagan coalition. The Republicans were left with a clutch of presidential contenders each standing for a fragment of a coalition in disarray.

The age of Reagan, born out of the center's collapse in the '60s and '70s, has, thanks to George W. Bush, finally lost its relevance, except as a nostalgic touchstone of bygone Republican glory. In one sense, it has been the victim of its own successes, having outlasted the Soviet Union, fundamentally altered the nation's political economy, and pushed the center of the nation's political gravity to the right. In another sense, it has owed its remarkable longevity to a confused and divided opposition, and to the persisting tenuousness of centrist politics. But what a new centrist politics might look like—whether Republican or Democratic, conservative or liberal—is as yet difficult to envisage. We are, for the moment, caught between two political eras, the one dead, the other struggling mightily to be born. ◆

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Barack in Iraq

Can he really end the war?

MICHAEL CROWLEY

As a candidate for president in 1968, Richard Nixon ran on what is (apocryphally) remembered as a "secret plan to end the war" in Vietnam. We now know, of course, that Nixon had no such intention. Today, Barack Obama's campaign is largely based around a promise to "end the war" in Iraq by withdrawing troops within 16 months.

But some Washington foreign policy mandarins insist this isn't possible—that a total U.S. withdrawal isn't achievable and Obama knows it. That Obama, like Nixon, in fact has a secret plan *not* to end the war. "The classic storyline is that everyone wants to get out, but we're not going to get out, and everyone's going to be disappointed," says Derek Chollet, a former foreign policy adviser to John Edwards. Or, at least, that Obama's speeches overstate the feasibility of a near-term Iraq exit. "Close to a pipe dream," says the Council on Foreign Relations' Leslie Gelb. "I regard that as campaign rhetoric rather than serious policy." "Wildly unrealistic campaign rhetoric," scoffs *The Washington Post* editorial page.

Not helping matters for Obama was his now-departed foreign policy adviser Samantha Power's recent concession that his withdrawal plan amounted to a "best-case scenario" subject to substantial revision when he takes office. Most recently came a provocative report in *The New York Sun* that the leader of the Obama campaign's working group on Iraq had authored a think-tank paper proposing to leave a whopping 60,000–80,000 American troops in Iraq through 2010. Yes, that pop you just heard was Dennis Kucinich's head exploding.

The truth is Obama has no secret plan for Iraq. Interviews with nearly two dozen foreign policy and military experts, as well as Obama's campaign advisers, and a close review of Obama's own statements on Iraq, suggest something more nuanced. What he is offering is a basic vision of withdrawal with muddy particulars, one his advisers are still formulating and one that, if he is elected, is destined to meet an even muddier reality on the ground. Obama has set a clear direction for U.S. policy in Iraq: He *wants* us out of Iraq; but he's not willing to do it at any cost—even if it means dashing the hopes of some of his more fervent and naïve supporters. And, when it comes to Iraq, whatever the merits of Obama's withdrawal plan may be, "Yes, We Can" might ultimately yield to "No, we can't."

Superficially, Obama's Iraq rhetoric makes his plan seem rather simpler than it is. His website states that Obama "*will immediately* begin to remove our troops from Iraq … and have all of our combat brigades out of Iraq within 16 months" (italics added). On the campaign trail, he repeatedly promises to "end this war and bring our troops home." When I explained to one aide that I was examining Obama's Iraq plan, he asked why I didn't simply write a story saying that Obama will withdraw all our troops from Iraq.

This surface-level simplicity, however, is the product of a long, slow evolution. Committed antiwar activists say Obama was too slow to call for a U.S. exit—something he didn't do until 2006. "We never had high expectations in regards to Senator Obama," says Tim Carpenter, a leading antiwar agitator with the lefty group Progressive Democrats of America.

Indeed, for more than two years after the 2003 invasion, Obama emphasized America's moral and strategic obligations in Iraq. "The failure of the Iraqi state would be a disaster," he told reporters in July 2004. "It would dishonor the 900-plus men and women who have already died. … It would be a betrayal of the promise that we made to the Iraqi people, and it would be hugely destabilizing from a national security perspective."

Even when Obama gave his first major speech calling for withdrawal, in November 2006, he didn't offer the kind of fixed timeline he proposes now. His plan also included a substantial caveat:

> I am not suggesting that this timetable be overly rigid. … The redeployment could be temporarily suspended if the parties in Iraq reach an effective political arrangement that stabilizes the situation and they offer us a clear and compelling rationale for maintaining certain troop levels. … In such a scenario, it is conceivable that a significantly reduced U.S. force might remain in Iraq for a more extended period of time.

Obama doesn't talk about a temporary suspension anymore. But the fine print of his plan is filled with caveats, ambiguities, and wiggle room—leaving open the possibility of maintaining anything from a token troop contingent by late 2010 all the way to a major force numbering many tens of thousands of American soldiers.

Obama carves out substantial wiggle room in the phrase "combat brigades," a term of art that describes frontline troops who enforce security and do regular battle with militias and insurgents. But there are many other things troops can do, and Obama concedes that he would leave so-called "residual forces" in Iraq—although his campaign won't provide an on-the-record estimate. "Barack has been very clear that he would work with the commanders on the ground, with military planners, to determine what the appropriate size is," says one policy aide. Last month, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that a "senior adviser" said Obama was "comfortable" with a "long-term" troop presence of five brigades, or roughly 35,000 troops, in Iraq. And, when he questioned Iraqi commander David Petraeus at a hearing in Washington in early April, Obama asked the general, "If we had the current status quo, and yet our troops had been drawn down to 30,000, would we consider that a success?"

Obama is clear about two categories of U.S. troops he believes must remain in Iraq even after the combat brigades go. One is the force that would guard the U.S. Embassy to prevent a larger-scale version of the Iranian hostage crisis. (Obama downplays this, saying that "we do it in France, we do it in Great Britain.") This contingent will likely be at least several thousand strong. Obama has also vowed to create

(continued on page 30)

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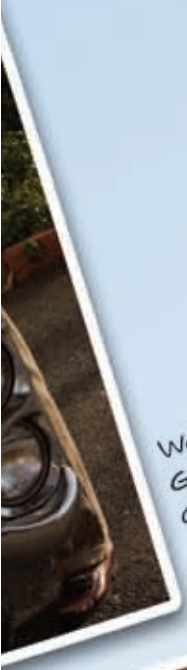

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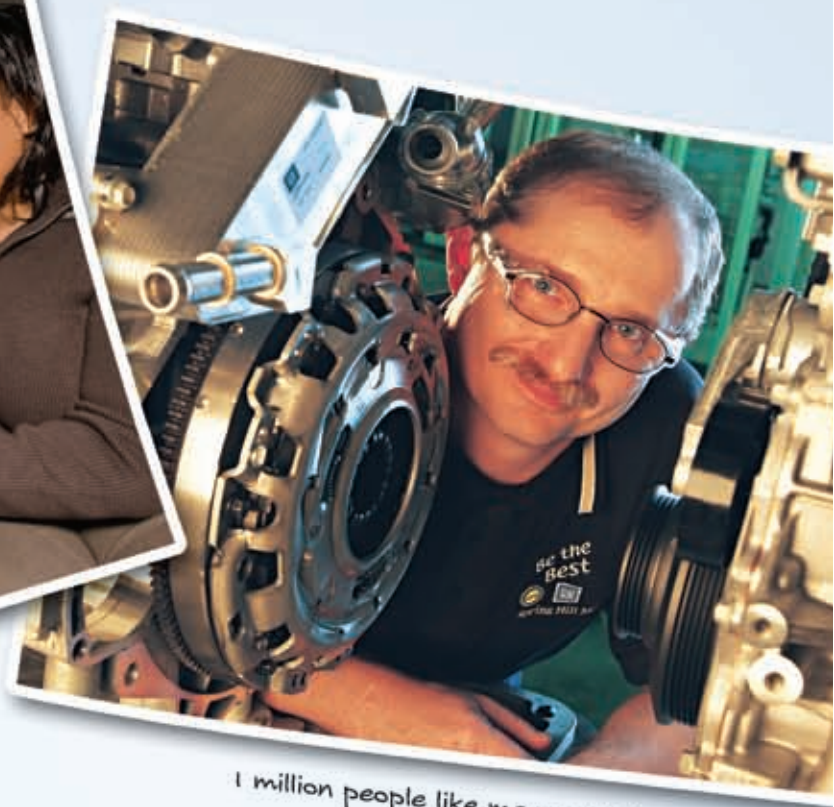

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a counterterrorism "strike force" that could attack Al Qaeda strongholds that spring up after the United States departs Iraq. This force would likely comprise several thousand more troops (speculation has run as high as 20,000). Obama has said those soldiers might be based in a neighboring country like Kuwait. But he has hedged on this question, and some analysts doubt the practicality of quickly blasting terrorist confabs from hundreds of miles away. Still, if his plan stopped there—and especially if his counterterrorism troops really were based elsewhere—Obama would come about as close as possible to completely leaving Iraq.

It's worth pausing to be clear about the many benefits Obama argues that near-complete withdrawal, however difficult it may be, would deliver. The United States might assume more strategic risk in Iraq specifically, but it would reduce its global strategic risk by freeing up resources and military might to deal with other problems, like stabilizing Afghanistan and chasing Al Qaeda. Foreign resentment toward the United States would likely subside, war spending could be turned into foreign aid, and, perhaps most important, showing Iraq we are serious about leaving could force its leaders to get serious about reconciliation. "Leaving is the greatest pressure that we have to bring to bear," says Obama's foreign policy speechwriter, Ben Rhodes.

The trouble is that Obama's ambitious withdrawal schedule assumes the many things that could go horribly wrong won't go wrong. And, even among foreign policy and military strategy experts sympathetic to withdrawal, there exists a consensus that pulling out isn't as easy as Obama's plan implies. "There's no way in which events on the ground won't have some impact on any withdrawal schedule. There's just no way," says Rand Beers, a former Clinton national security adviser and president of the center-left National Security Network. "You cannot say we're going to be out by such-and-such a date," says former Democratic representative Lee Hamilton, a co-chairman of the 2006 Iraq Study Group who has endorsed Obama. In other words, it's not hard to imagine scenarios where troop levels remain stubbornly high.

One is the murky situation in which withdrawal left a bloody froth of violence in its wake. Obama acknowledges this likelihood and says he can tolerate some bloodshed as a consequence of his policy—in part, he argues, because "there's going to be more violence over the long haul by us not changing the course." His advisers also say he would likely remove troops from more stable areas first, saving violence-prone hotspots for later. But tolerating a wave of violence—sure to be televised around the globe—might be difficult in practice. "If violence escalates, that's going to create a lot of very bad visuals," says Stephen Biddle, a military analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Others say Americans have run out of patience with policing Iraqi infighting. But Obama offers a significant exception: genocide. Obama frequently says genocide prevention should be a higher U.S. priority, and concedes it could be a course-changer in Iraq. "It is conceivable," Obama told *The New York Times*, "that there comes a point where things descend into the mayhem that shocks the conscience as we say to ourselves, this is not acceptable, any more than what happened in Darfur is not acceptable." The fine print of Obama's plan even allows for providing "armed escorts" to fearful Iraqis wanting to relocate to safer areas, which would be an unprecedented operation of impossible-to-determine scope. If major violence unfolds in Iraq, then, we can expect a heated debate about whether or not it qualifies as "genocide." (Confusingly, however, Obama told the Associated Press last year that military force alone cannot stop genocide, noting that, "if that's the criteria by which we are making decisions on the deployment of U.S. forces, then by that argument you would have 300,000 troops in the Congo right now," and "we would be deploying unilaterally and occupying the Sudan"—suggesting that Obama's position here is still a work in progress.)

Similarly hazy is whether and under what circumstances Obama would choose to continue training Iraqi security forces. Stepped-up training was a key recommendation of the Iraq Study Group. Yet Obama says he would make continued training contingent on national political reconciliation—enough to assure him that the United States wouldn't simply be professionalizing sectarian militias. Once again, Obama has not been clear about his criteria for making these determinations. But a loose interpretation would provide an escape clause to leave behind a large contingent of trainers and the troops needed to protect them. The Iraq Study Group suggested 20,000. With U.S. combat brigades withdrawn, however, protecting trainers would demand more troops. The alternative, which few outside the Obama orbit find plausible, is that Obama would walk away from an unreconciled Iraq altogether, regardless of its ability to secure and defend itself. There's just no knowing for sure. Obama will, in effect, cross that bridge when he comes to it. As he recently explained to *Newsweek*: "I'd be in a constant process of evaluating conditions on the ground."

A CAMPAIGN PLATFORM can only offer so much granular detail, of course. And how Obama's plan unfolds will hinge largely on the unknowable question of Iraq's condition come January. But much will also depend on the debate within his administration among senior policymakers once they have real strategic—not just political—responsibilities on their shoulders.

While in broad agreement on the need for a drawdown, Obama's inner circle of foreign policy advisers is still debating the specifics of a future Iraq policy. This circle includes Clinton administration veterans Tony Lake, Susan Rice, and Greg Craig; Denis McDonough, former foreign policy adviser to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle; speechwriter Rhodes, a former aide to Lee Hamilton; former Pentagon counterinsurgency expert Sarah Sewell; and military men like former Clinton Navy secretary Richard Danzig, former Air Force officer Scott Gration, and former Air Force general Merrill McPeak. The personal views on Iraq of all these people isn't known, but this is not a homogenous or doctrinaire bunch. Danzig, a potential Obama defense secretary, recently told *The Washington Post* that he personally supports setting a negotiable exit date based on political progress. Rhodes's mentor, Hamilton, opposes a fixed timetable. Lake, who opposed the war from the start, expressed concern about the consequences of withdrawal in a February 2004 op-ed. "[T]o walk away [from Iraq], leaving chaos, would be a strategic and moral disaster," he wrote.

Obama also draws advice from an outer ring of Iraq-specific advisers who are effectively auditioning to become the State Department and Pentagon policymakers in his administration. Closest to the Obama camp are the determined withdrawal advocates at the Center for American Progress (CAP), which is home to McDonough, as well

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as Iraq specialists and campaign advisers Larry Korb and Brian Katulis. Korb and Katulis co-authored CAP's signature Iraq plan, which they call "strategic reset" and which calls for a swift exit accompanied by intensified diplomacy and a token U.S. force of perhaps 10,000 in the Kurdish north. Strategic reset also proposes to cancel training and funding for Iraqi forces unless some national political reconciliation is reached. (That approach diverts from some mainstream foreign policy thinking, including the Iraq Study Group, which emphasized the importance of training Iraqi forces.) "Strategic reset" ultimately looks a lot like the Obama plan.

But Obama also draws expertise from a more centrist Washington policy shop, the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), which has issued a plan envisioning up to 60,000 troops in Iraq for several years, though with an increased training role. Danzig is a CNAS board member, and its fellows include Colin Kahl, who leads Obama's Iraq working group. (The group is a semi-formal assemblage of ten to twelve experts who distill information and assist with tasks like debate preparation, Kahl says, rather than make policy.) Kahl is a proponent of the middle-ground concept of "conditional engagement," which incentivizes and rewards the political progress by Iraqi leaders with a larger U.S. troop presence to help them provide security.

Obama has also said repeatedly that he would consult with "commanders on the ground" to set his strategy. Right now, that doesn't seem entirely consistent with his withdrawal plan. "If, indeed, a President Obama were to listen to his ground commanders, right now as the situation stands, without dramatic change, they would not be recommending withdrawal," the veteran *Time* Iraq correspondent Michael Ware explained on CNN last month, echoing a common view. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Mike Mullen told reporters last month that a precipitous withdrawal "would concern me greatly." (Mullen's two-year term doesn't expire until August 2009.) And, while the pro-surge U.S. commander in Iraq, David Petraeus, is expected to move on to a new post by next January, his likely replacement—Army Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli—has warned that "failure is not an option" in Iraq.

George W. Bush has demonstrated that a president can cherry-pick advice from his generals; and Obama has recently explained that he will rely on military chiefs for tactics, not strategy. But it's clear that the specific shape of an Obama withdrawal plan will be subject to a policy debate both at the Pentagon and within his advisory circle—one that has yet to fully play out. "The discussion is, how can we best leverage our phased redeployment from Iraq to push them in a direction we want them to go?" says Kahl. "I would think that's the discussion people would want the advisers around a candidate to have."

One trouble, of course, with Obama's more subtle options for leaving some troops in Iraq is the enormous political pressure that he will feel to follow through on his generally unsubtle campaign promises on withdrawal. A recent Rasmussen poll found that 65 percent of Americans want to see the United States out of Iraq within a year. At least that many people would likely expect Obama to follow through on his 16-month pledge. Failure to do so could be a political disaster.

"Campaigns mean something," says Bill Galston, a former Clinton domestic policy adviser who opposed the war. "To enter office on one understanding and then begin your presidency by violating that understanding is a prescription for a failed presidency. Period." And Obama would face an already-established antiwar apparatus, complete with a well-funded activist base, not to mention a Democratic Congress still determined to deliver on its promises of ending the war.

It may be that, if Obama can remove U.S. troops from frontline combat duties, take the "American face" off the occupation, and dramatically reduce casualties, that will be enough to satisfy the antiwar base and buy him more policy flexibility. But, for many of the war's leading critics, even leaving training forces in Iraq—not to mention tens of thousands of private security contractors, about whom Obama says virtually nothing—is intolerable. "This myth that we have soldiers on the ground that we don't call combat forces, expose them to all the dangers on the ground—minus the reinforcements they currently have—is absurd," says Tom Andrews of the antiwar coalition Win Without War. "From a practical point of view, and a political point of view, I don't think there's much of an option but to cut bait and go. Certainly, anything short of that is not going to be acceptable to me and people in our coalition." (John Edwards has called a training mission "continuing the occupation of Iraq.")

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Still, some advisers say the predictions that Obama won't be able to fulfill his campaign pledge of withdrawal are the creation of Iraq hawks invested in the war's success. "I may be in the minority, but I actually think [full withdrawal] is likely what's going to happen," says one antiwar think-tanker with ties to the Obama campaign. "The conventional wisdom is that, once they get into power for whatever reason, they will change and adopt that strategy. I reject that conventional wisdom, because I think it is based on the proposition that we don't have an alternative to victory. We do, and it's called losing. We have been losing for a very long time."

This may be true. But "losing," even if it's not your fault, is not how you want to begin your presidency. Especially with conservatives poised to redefine the Iraq debate. "The argument will be that, under the Bush-Petraeus policy, violence was down and things were under control," says Stephen Biddle. "Then the Democrats came in, and things went to hell in a handbasket. If things getting worse is the apparent consequence of a policy choice, I think there will be a partisan price to pay."

Finally, it's worth considering the potential challenges of a rapid exit. "We have moved an iron and concrete Mount Everest to Iraq since 2003. Heavy stuff that cannot be flown out, that has to be driven by truck," says Biddle. Ten thousand truck trips, some estimate. There are also 1,900 tanks and armored vehicles, 43,000 trucks, plus 700 aircraft in Iraq.

And it won't be easy getting it all out. Most materiel would travel down Route Tampa, an asphalt highway that makes a conveniently narrow target for insurgents, who already bomb the route regularly. Some military planners anxiously recall the way the Red Army battled home from Afghanistan in 1988 and 1989 through mujahedin rocket ambushes at perilous choke points. The exit of 120,000 Soviet troops cost 523 lives. "Who wants to be the last to die for a withdrawal?" asks Biddle.

But who wants to be the last to die for a failed occupation, either? Such are the gruesome choices that a president Obama will face, regardless of whether his euphoric supporters realize it yet. ◆

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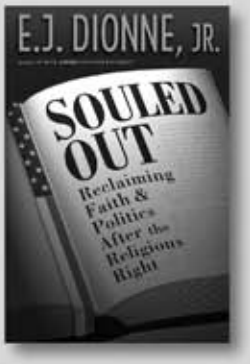

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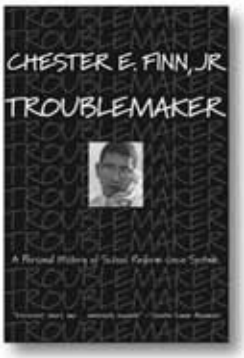

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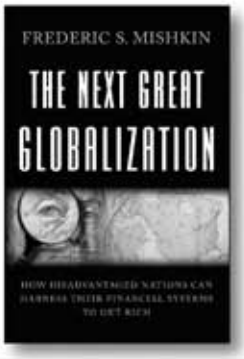

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

PARTICULAR PLACES

Surprising things happen in *Tuya's Marriage.* A herd of sheep pushes across the screen, then the herdsman rides in—on a camel. We learn that the herdsman is actually a woman. Later, she rides out on that camel in a snowstorm to find her son, a storm that has been reported to her by radio. For a party in a big town, this woman, who lives in a crude house, goes to a luxe hotel whose name is displayed in English. All these surprises occur in Mongolia.

The director, Wang Quan An, makes no special point of these oddities: they are merely part of the lives that the film enters. Sheep herding and the vast Mongolian plains are not new subjects, but Wang uses them as the means by which to summon Tuya. She is a young woman who, in Lu Wei's screenplay, is a source of strength, courage, taciturnity, competence. Tuya has two children and is the wife of a herdsman, Bater, who cannot work owing to a recent leg injury. It is Tuya who keeps the family going.

Bundled from head to foot, solid, swift, she is as much a force as a woman. Another surprise is that she is ultrapractical in an unexpected way. Loving wife though she is, after a lumbar dislocation she is willing to divorce the disabled Bater in order to marry a man willing to support both of them. A fiery young herdsman, distraught with his own marital troubles, is mad about Tuya, especially after she announces her unusual divorce plans. But he is outpaced by wealthy men who offer Tuya what she wants—comfort for herself and her children, plus care for Bater—if she will marry one of them. Added to the surprises is our conviction that this woman, this swathed prole of proles, is exactly what those men think she is—a nuptial prize.

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But this is not a marital comedy glistening with surprises: it is too close to labor and pain and fear. Tuya is a kind of swaddled goddess. When her son is frightened of wolves during that snowstorm, she hugs him and says, "Don't worry. Mama will eat the wolves." We can believe it.

The story is intricate, unexpectedly so, because we assume that these are simple people whose needs and drives and thoughts are elemental. What we may overlook is that elemental drives do not exclude complicated means, such as Tuya's divorce proposal. Anyway, simple or otherwise, these people live on a figurative border. The way they dress and house and clothe themselves, eat and drink, seems ancient, yet modern trucks and the swanky automobile of a visitor imply that the next generation or two will be much less firmly strapped to the past.

Wang, whose mother was born in the vicinity of the film's locale, puts this place and these lives before us with affection and admiring rigor. He is magnificently aided by the German cinematographer Lutz Reitemeier, who worked with him on a previous film. To Reitemeier, colors are feasts. Some shots might have been calendar art—though gorgeous, not saccharine. A wedding party near the end, with everyone arrayed in breathtaking finery, is handled by Reitemeier with almost the extra dimension of impasto painting. (The resplendent clothes are another surprise.)

Most of the cast are non-professionals, but all them provide what is needed of them. A man called Senge, who plays the firebrand, could certainly be useful in more films. Tuya is played by Yu Nan, a graduate of the Beijing Film Academy, who has been in two previous Wang films. For the first minutes of her performance, we wonder how Wang found a nonprofessional Mongolian woman who could fulfill this complex role; soon we see that he found an actress who could truly inhabit it. Yu's acting is surreptitiously subtle. And note her hands. She has understood that the performance of a laboring person begins with the hands.

TUYA'S MARRIAGE
Music Box

FLIGHT OF THE RED BALLOON
IFC

JELLYFISH
Zeitgeist

Another estimable Asian director, Hou Hsiao-Hsien of Taiwan, has found his inspiration on the other side of the world—or rather in a film made there. In 1956, Albert Lamorisse, a French director, made a thirty-four-minute film called *The Red Balloon* that quickly became a pet in art houses and universities and film societies everywhere. Set in Paris—lovingly—the picture follows a small boy as he follows the travels of a red balloon through the skies over the city, as it floats up and down, wandering, pausing, seeming to tease. Watching the film was like having a brief pleasant dream. Now Hou, enchanted by the picture, has used it as the launch site for a film that he was asked to make about Paris. Result: *Flight of the Red Balloon.*

Which is precisely where it begins. A boy in present-day Paris is watching a red balloon in the sky, speaking to it as he walks and gambols along the street, calling to it to come down. But it ignores him.

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The boy goes home to his mother, played by Juliette Binoche. Mother is an actress doing voices in a puppet theater for children. She has another child, a daughter who lives in Brussels and sometimes comes to Paris, and she has a husband—or at least a companion—who is now in Montreal. She engages a young Taiwanese woman, a film student (she is herself remaking *The Red Balloon*!), as a nanny for her boy while she herself keeps on the move. These are the chief figures of a non-exciting, interesting story.

Hou states that his script supplied only the events and that the cast improvised the dialogue (the method of the Commedia dell'arte centuries earlier). Well, the dialogue, to trust subtitles, is all right, but the story that Hou provided is no more than a series of occurrences. All that happens is that we observe some lives (not through the instrumentality of the balloon), and we roll along with them, discovering yet again that the daily doings of nice-enough people, if warmly presented, can fascinate.

Warmth is not Hou's only quality. He has a sense of texture. One long scene set in the small messy living room of Binoche's apartment begins with a blind piano tuner being brought in and setting to work at one side. Then Binoche comes home, quarreling with a neighbor downstairs, after which there are scenes with her boy and a telephone conversation with her distant daughter. Through all this activity, the piano tuner keeps plinking. What holds us through this scene is to some degree the interest we now have in these people, but mostly it is the way the whole scene is composed. Sometimes when listening to an orchestra, we think, "Ah, he added the bassoon just in time. Now the cellos save the day." Hou's scene affords the same sort of structural experience.

Binoche continues to show more versatility than was predictable in her early career. The boy is unactorish and taking. But a puzzle remains about the whole film. What is the relationship of the red balloon to this picture? To the portrayal of Paris à la Lamorisse? For long stretches the balloon disappears and is forgotten by the boy. At the end it reappears and drifts away over Paris as if it had fulfilled its mission and is now off to further adventures. But it has had none here. We can be glad that Lamorisse's picture stimulated Hou to work in Paris, but any number of other French films might have done the same in this utterly unrelated way.

The title of an Israeli film called *Jellyfish* is not inexplicable, as some recent titles have been: there are relevant mentions of jellyfish in the picture. But the tone of the title is quite misleading. The film is far from limp or dank.

It was written by Shira Geffen, a well-known Israeli writer, who co-directed it with Etgar Keret, also a well-known writer. He has done short films and here, with Geffen, does his first feature. They live in Tel Aviv, and they wanted to make a picture about their city. They depict three young women whose stories, they thought, would present some of their city. This reminded me of *Caramel*, the recent Lebanese film that had a similar intent about Beirut. The difference is that in *Caramel* the stories had some relation to one another; *Jellyfish* is more of a collection of independent stories.

Unlike most such collections by the same author(s), the styles differ. The stories are realistic, romantic, comic, and mysteriously symbolic; Keret and Geffen treat them all with delicacy and insight. Batya, a dispirited waitress, finds an abandoned small girl on the beach and takes her to the police. The child disappears, but she leaves a sort of mark on Batya. Keren is a bride whose wedding is held in a large hall. She goes to the toilet, a narrow stall of a room, and can't reopen the door to get out. (This scene is shot from overhead, which helps the odd irritating humor.) So she shucks her wedding gown, somehow climbs up to the transom over the door, and squeezes through. But when she falls to the floor outside, she injures her leg, which complicates the honeymoon—in a swank hotel—in unforeseeable ways. The third woman is a Philippine domestic worker, who is often on the phone to her son back home but who is so busily moving around that she can't help showing us much of the city.

The film succeeds in its main purpose: to present some of Tel Aviv's atmosphere. Incomprehensible, however, is its last symbolic touch. The small girl found on the beach suddenly reappears on the beach, walks into the sea, and disappears. Batya, who sees this plunge, dives in to find her, and there are underwater shots of the two. Is the child meant to represent some lost joy that Batya will sacrifice herself to regain? The metaphysical moment seems to hang outside the picture—which is nonetheless a lively partial portrait of Tel Aviv, accomplished in vivid colors. ◆

Sarah Williams Goldhagen on Architecture

STOPPED MAKING SENSE

To build a building is hard; to criticize a building is, by comparison, easy. For a serious critic, the impulse to write uncomplimentary things should always provoke a bout of preliminary introspection. Does one write from the lofty principle that truth must be spoken to power, or at least to fashion? Will the reader come away from this exercise in scorching criticism of buildings and urban spaces with a heightened appreciation for the built environment and its importance to our daily lives? Should one be strict even with buildings that are more or less positive contributions to the otherwise vast wasteland of mediocre urban construction, and if so, how strict?

NEW MUSEUM
SANAA

These thoughts needled me as I walked away from the recently opened New Museum in New York by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, the principals of the Tokyo-based firm SANAA. The pair have been established in Japan for some years, especially with their widely admired 21 Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, which opened in 2005. SANAA's star has been rising in the West, too, since Rem Koolhaas anointed Sejima by convincing the city of Almere, a suburb of Amsterdam for which Koolhaas had done the master plan, to commission her firm to build one of the principal iconic buildings in its new town center—a theater and cultural center called De Kunstlinie, which was finished in 2007.

Here is why I was disinclined to write about SANAA's recently opened New Museum in New York. At fifty-two, Sejima is still young for a successful architect; and at thirteen years old, SANAA likewise is young. It is one thing to put the pressure on an international superstar—Frank Gehry or Koolhaas, architects who get far more publicity and accolades than anyone, much less they, deserve. But it is another to speak ill of the work of a still unfamiliar architect and

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her partner whose work is barely known in the United States. A critic must have a conscience about such things. Besides, so few women practitioners succeed. And the New Museum is SANAA's first major building in the States (although the much smaller Glass Pavilion at the Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio was widely praised when it opened in 2006). And why write about another museum anyway, and thereby feed the media's museum frenzy, which conveys to the public the sadly mistaken notion that meaningful architecture can reside only in a handful of iconic cultural institutions? (A well-known architect recently remarked to me that designing a museum or a performing arts center "really isn't that difficult," because their programs are fairly straightforward and their technical challenges largely resolved.) Most new buildings are bad, or at least not good. Why pick on the New Museum?

But then one watches with increasing dismay as others inflate even a tiny bubble of competence into a balloon as big and as ridiculous as those floating by in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. And then one also reflects upon what the design of the New Museum inadvertently reveals about the world of contemporary art in New York.

SANAA's New Museum is a freeze-dried packet of desiccated minimalism. It is in no way miraculous. We are in more trouble than I thought if *this* is the project that is supposed to restore faith in New York City or point the way toward the future of architecture. The most that can be said in its favor is that in the New Museum, as in the firm's other projects, SANAA raises provocative questions about the value of minimalism in architecture.

The New Museum, on the west side of the Bowery, is set mid-block on a tight site (71 feet wide and 112 feet deep) in a huddled place, a visually, aurally, and olfactorily raucous environment of honking horns, restaurant supply stores, brownstone walk-ups, soup kitchens, and occasional islands of gentrification—a Whole Foods market, a residential high-rise. The building's program is fairly typical of a small museum: a dramatic event space of the sort on which many such institutions rely for revenue, raised by rentals for private meetings and parties; an entry-cum-café-cum-bookstore-cum-gift-shop; offices for museum staff; and gallery spaces.

SANAA has packed these various functions into a single monolithic image: a seven-story, 174-foot-high tower composed of six lacy gray boxes set askew on top of one another. I say lacy because the building, above the plate-glass ground level, is shrink-wrapped in silvery-gray, diamond-perforated, extruded aluminum mesh. Exterior quietude set amid an urban cacophony, the New Museum's façade is a pleasing blank. From the street, prospecting the New Museum's compositional balance of seeming rectilinearity and actual irregularity is as momentarily amusing as looking at a child's uneasily balanced tower of wooden blocks.

Given the dimensions of the site, the New Museum could get the square footage it needed only by building up. SANAA's *parti* for the project—that is archispeak for the overall design concept—is that by setting each story askew from the next, skylights could be created that would allow natural light to fall inside. It is not a new idea (the mid-twentieth-century American architects George Howe and William Lescaze proposed something similar for the original Museum of Modern Art, and so did Koolhaas in OMA's original scheme for the Seattle Public Library), but it is a reasonably good idea. In the case of the New Museum, someone—a cost-cutting consultant, or a curator demanding control of the light, or perhaps just an inept designer—got his or her hands on SANAA's *parti* and ruined whatever promise it held. Only minimal natural light is perceptible inside, because it is filtered through so many layers (two panes of glass and a polycarbonate panel below, a metal grating above), and because the dimensions of the wall-length skylight slits are too diminutive. Even worse, the main source of lighting on every floor is exposed fluorescent bulbs, which blare and glare out any daylight that might actually fall within. The natural light admitted is barely worth the ample $830-plus per square foot that it cost to construct such a structurally complex building.

The New Museum's first-floor façade is floor-to-ceiling glass. For technologically or detail-minded professionals, this floor offers wow factors. So then, wow! A seven-story building looks like it is floating on a base of glass! And, wow! How did SANAA get those enormous glass plates to slam directly into poured concrete floors? (In fact, there are expansion joints that allow this evident sleight-of-hand, nearly invisible because the material is dyed to match the color of the concrete.)

New Museum, 2007

The New Museum's three principal exhibition spaces are simple white-walled free-span galleries, which are located on the second, third, and fourth floors. Each floor has a different ceiling height, as is common in museums of modern and contemporary art. (For a geographically proximate example, look at Marcel Breuer's Whitney Museum of American Art.) Connecting the New Museum's third- and fourth-level galleries is a staircase tucked behind a wall along the building's north edge. Cool staircases have become nearly a *sine qua non* in contemporary museums, largely because all that

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most museum curators really want from their architects is blank white walls and free-span spaces. This leaves few opportunities for actual design. Since most museumgoers must at one point or another ascend or descend a staircase, staircases have become a focal point of many recent museum commissions, including Yoshio Taniguchi's Museum of Modern Art in New York, Herzog & de Meuron's de Young Museum in San Francisco, and Tod Williams and Billie Tsien's addition to the Phoenix Art Museum.

The drama of the New Museum's internal staircase is owed to its being hidden away, so that one does not expect to find anything in the galleries other than exhibited art. And because the design of the staircase itself combines radical simplicity (one white handrail) with radical proportions: it runs between two tall white walls, a fifty-foot-long straight promenade which, at four feet wide, is so tight as to be nearly ludicrous. (Though not in Japan, where compressed proportional sensibilities, born of necessity, are common. One of Sejima's most interesting projects, which she did solo, is her House in a Plum Grove in Tokyo, in which she squeezed a family's entire two-story house into less than 1,000 fascinating square feet). The other attempted wow is the New Museum's event space, called the Sky Room. Glassed in on three sides and located on the top floor, the Sky Room offers views over lower Manhattan. That's nice. But SANAA's design contribution consists of little more than opening up the views. Moreover, placing the event space on the museum's top floor has the decided disadvantage of making what could be the New Museum's central space of respite and ceremony into an unnecessary side-trip for most visitors.

Other than its mildly amusing exterior quietude, its careful ground-floor detailing (mild wow), and its internal staircase-chute (for some, a mild wow; for others, oppressive), the New Museum offers little. And these modest virtues are vastly outweighed by its flaws. Begin with the most basic consideration. Is this a nice place to be? Alas, it is not. It is downright unpleasant. The main circulation route through the building, to which one arrives after a diagonal sequence from the front door, is a single, excruciatingly slow elevator. Desperate for escape, one hunts for stairs. Those stairs are, in fact, right next to the elevator shaft—but in SANAA's fanatical minimalism, they are hidden behind a barely marked white door. When, finally, you identify your escape route from the still-unarrived elevator, you spill into a tight, mean, and unremarkable fire egress.

Standing in the second-, third-, and fourth-floor gallery spaces offers this: white, rectangular, largely windowless loft-like boxes, which one surveys from foot-unfriendly, rock-hard concrete floors while shielding one's eyes from the glare emitted by the relentless, repetitive grid of long, narrow, exposed fluorescent lights. Now, there is nothing wrong with grittiness in architecture. Many modern and contemporary architects have made a virtue of the everyday, from Alison + Peter Smithson's lovely little Sugden House in England to a number of contemporary architects' recent experiments in prefabrication, seen in *Dwell* magazine and exhibitions such as "Some Assembly Required: Contemporary Prefabricated Houses," which traveled to various venues around the country in 2006–2007. But at the New Museum grittiness is not elevated to greatness. Standing in the New Museum is akin to standing in a cleaned-out subway station. It is merely grim.

There are other, more unsettling problems. The way that SANAA deals with the administrative offices betrays an assent to institutional hierarchies that responsible architects should challenge. The New Museum's administrative offices are crammed under the lowest ceilings in the building's seven stories. Underlings are stuffed, 1950s-style, into wholly pedestrian office cubicles in an open interior loft space. Only the top administrators get "window" offices, though even these windows, in deference to the building's monolithic gray extruded aluminum skin, do not look onto the street. Instead they look at the perforated metal grid.

There is more in what this building's design reveals about the institution it houses. The New Museum is one of the few museums in New York City, and the only major one in Manhattan, devoted exclusively to the exhibition of contemporary art in all media. In recent years, contemporary art has become the transitional fetish object of so many venture capitalists and hedge fund managers that one should cheer for an institution where, in theory, one can see cutting-edge examples of it in a non-commercial, or at least less commercial, venue. Yet what have the New Museum's curators and administrators chosen to house new art? The most conventional exhibition spaces imaginable: free-span, artificially lit white boxes. Shouldn't a museum of contemporary art challenge one's expectations of contemporary architecture? Shouldn't a museum devoted to the new offer up new experiences along with new objects? That is the real irony of the New Museum: in architectural conception and as a space to exhibit art, it is wholly, uninterestingly conventional—as conventional, indeed, as much of the contemporary art that was displayed in its opening exhibition.

There is much pluralism in contemporary architecture, and in museum design. In the latter instance, the past decade has seen two prominent trends. There is the sometimes tasteful, often merely pretentious shopping-mall mentality of the Renzo Piano–Yoshio Taniguchi set (epitomized by Taniguchi's fatuous promise to the MoMA Board of Trustees that if they raised "really a lot of money" (as opposed to the $858 million that they did raise), he would "make the building disappear." And there is the overwrought complexity offered by the likes of Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid, and Coop Himmelb(l)au, architects smitten with the possibilities offered by digital technologies, which they use to create ever more complex, ever more unthinkable buildings. To shopping-mall mediocrity and florid complexity, SANAA's simple geometries, stripping away of ornamental flourishes, and meticulous attention to detail (as in the unforgettable joining of the ground-floor glass panels to the concrete floors), offers a welcome retort. The New Museum is not itself a distinguished or even a very good building. Still, the lesson for contemporary architects should be that neither lavishly expensive shopping centers nor exhibitionist contortions are the only paths into our architectural future.

SANAA's New Museum leaves me with a bigger question, too. Is there anything left to be squeezed out of minimalism? After Donald Judd built his boxes and, in the process, transformed our understanding of space and the role of our own bodies in creating and recreating it, what can we learn from more Judd-like boxes? To put it in architectural terms, after Ludwig Mies van der Rohe created minimalist lofts for art, as in the New National Gallery in Berlin, do we really need more paeans to his vision? Mies's biographer recounts the German architect's amusing dismay at the turn American architecture took in the 1970s, when historicist eclecticism captured the imaginations of many up-and-coming practitioners. Shaking his head in befuddled protest, Mies reportedly complained, "We showed them what to do … what the hell went wrong?" Maybe there is more to explore in minimalism than simply to do it again and again with feeling. But the New Museum has not demonstrated what that more might be. ◆

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Martha C. Nussbaum

STAGES OF THOUGHT

SHAKESPEARE THE THINKER
By A. D. Nuttall
(Yale University Press, 428 pp., $30)

SHAKESPEARE'S PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVERING THE MEANING BEHIND THE PLAYS
By Colin McGinn
(Harper Perennial, 230 pp., $13.95)

DOUBLE VISION: MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA
By Tzachi Zamir
(Princeton University Press, 234 pp., $35)

I.

Philosophers often try to write about Shakespeare. Most of the time they are ill-equipped to do so. There is something irresistibly tempting in the depth and the complexity of the plays, and it lures people who respond to that complexity with abstract thought, even if for the most part they are utterly unprepared, emotionally or stylistically, to write about literary experience. Such philosophers see profound thought in Shakespeare, not wrongly. But armed with their standard analytic equipment, they frequently produce accounts that are laughably reductive, contributing little or nothing to philosophy or to the understanding of Shakespeare.

To make any contribution worth caring about, a philosopher's study of Shakespeare should do three things. First and most centrally, it should really *do* philosophy, and not just allude to familiar philosophical ideas and positions. It should pursue tough questions and come up with something interesting and subtle—rather than just connecting Shakespeare to this or that idea from Philosophy 101. A philosopher reading Shakespeare should wonder, and ponder, in a genuinely philosophical way. Second, it should illuminate the world of the plays, attending closely enough to language and to texture that the interpretation changes the way we see the work, rather than just uses the work as grist for some argumentative mill. And finally, such a study should offer some account of why philosophical thinking needs to turn to Shakespeare's plays, or to works like them. Why must the philosopher care about these plays? Do they supply to thought something that a straightforward piece of philosophical prose cannot supply, and if so, what?

Two of these new books do very badly by these criteria. To be fair, A. D. Nuttall, who died not long ago, was not a philosopher, but a literary critic who did impressive work on the margins of philosophy. (*A Common Sky: Philosophy and the Literary Imagination* was a marvelous exploration of epistemological themes in the Romantic poets.) It is not terribly surprising that his book contributes nothing of original philosophical interest, though it is disappointing that the ideas on offer in this tired, diffuse book are so far beneath Nuttall at his best. Nuttall believes that it is doing philosophy to, say, poke fun at Stoicism in the context of *Julius Caesar*—but without the least philosophical puzzlement about why so many people lived and died by and for that philosophy, or about what might have motivated its more controversial positions. In general, Nuttall's book exudes a complacency that is most unphilosophical.

Nor does Nuttall satisfy on the second count. He has isolated illuminations to offer about this line or that scene, and he discusses current trends in literary theory well. But he spends such a short time on each play that no real insight is possible, no surprising new interpretation. Even the writing is flat and tired, the voice of someone who is no longer electrified by the dramas and who finds the task of interpretation rather boring. And Nuttall has nothing to say about why someone interested in philosophical problems should turn to Shakespeare.

Colin McGinn's book is much more intelligent, and it is the book of a real philosopher, with reasonably useful things to say about gender as performance, about the fluid nature of the self, about knowledge of other minds. Still, it is all at the level of Phil 101. McGinn does not offer anything subtle or new; he just identifies familiar philosophical themes that figure in the plays. The impression conveyed is that Shakespeare has gotten a good grade in Phil 101, with McGinn as his professor and his superior in understanding. This is a terrible way to approach Shakespeare's complexity.

McGinn's attention to language and dramatic structure is so hasty that he, too, has no new or convincing readings of the plays he tackles; he just gives the reader a breezy tour through them, never pausing to be puzzled. Nor does McGinn give any account of why we might need to turn to Shakespeare for philosophical illumination. McGinn obviously enjoys reading Shakespeare, but Shakespeare himself does not make a creative contribution to the thought distilled from the plays. McGinn already knows what to think about the philosophical issues, and, with a certain narcissism, he is pleased to find confirmation of himself in Shakespeare.

How might a philosopher do better? The most distinguished Anglo-American philosophical writing on Shakespeare in recent years, by a long distance, may be found in the work of Stanley Cavell. Cavell's essays, collected in the book *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, amply fulfill my first and second standards for this enterprise. His sometimes mysterious and idiosyncratic readings of a group of plays offer philosophical insights that are surprising and subtle, while genuinely illuminating themes of love, avoidance, skepticism, and acknowledgment in the dramas. Cavell's writing is difficult, at times opaque. But we should see this way of writing as expressing the agony of human emotions and the intense difficulty of philosophical thought.

Despite the great merits of Cavell's particular insights, however, he has little to say about why we would want to turn to poetic drama in general, and to Shakespeare in particular, in pursuit of philosophical themes. His readings of Shakespeare tend to confirm the philosophical notions for which he has already argued independently, in readings of Wittgenstein, Descartes, and other philosophers. Anyone who fails to read Cavell's justly famous essay on the avoidance of love in *King Lear* can discover the same theme amply explored by way of Wittgenstein in *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (or by way of Hollywood film comedy in *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*). Little is said about why it might be important to engage with Shakespeare's plays, among all other texts, on those questions. Indeed, Cavell's remarkable reading of *Othello* was originally published as the tragic conclusion

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to his philosophical magnum opus, *The Claim of Reason*, where it follows four hundred pages of argument about Wittgenstein, Austin, and many others.

But now we have Tzachi Zamir's *Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama*, head and shoulders above its rivals. A first book by a young Israeli philosopher, *Double Vision* stands comparison with Cavell for philosophical subtlety and insight (though not for a more systematic philosophical contribution), and Zamir is, happily, much more upfront about what the enterprise of doing philosophy by consulting works of literature is all about, and why it might be important. Helpful, too, is the fact that Zamir writes with an evocative grace that shows a deep emotional response to literature and a sense of its complexities and its mysteries. His style itself helps to convince us that Shakespeare is not simply being used as a primer for Philosophy 101, or reduced to an analytic paragraph. Unlike McGinn, Zamir writes as someone capable of being puzzled, capable of delving into the painful or exhilarating depths of certain problems with Shakespeare as his guide rather than his pupil. *Double Vision* is quite a brilliant book.

II.

Zamir understands that it is crucial not just to show that there are themes in the plays that philosophers have also discussed, and not just to show, through interpretation, what the plays contribute to our understanding of those themes, but also to say why it is important to turn to plays in particular, and to literary works in general, for philosophical guidance. His argument is complicated, but we may summarize it as follows. Literary works offer their readers a range of experiences that philosophical prose cannot provide, reshaping their perceptions in a variety of ways. Some of these experiences are varieties of emotional response; some are experiences of dislocation and a loss of meaning; some are experiences of losing a sense of meaning and then finding it again; some are experiences of not being able to figure out who or what a certain person is, or even what a person or self might be. And sometimes the experience is that of following the shifting trajectory of a human relationship.

So there is not just one thing that literature offers. It portrays and dissects a wide range of human experiences, all of which we have in life, but which literature offers in a concentrated and heightened form. And when we are dealing with not just any writer, but with Shakespeare, we find again and again that the shaping of plot and the resources of language are used to construct and then to deepen a set of these experiences in ways that provide resources for knowledge. If what we are after is to understand the search for value against the threat of nihilism, we would do well to engage with *Macbeth*; or to understand how a certain theatricalization of the self can be employed to deflect attention away from the indeterminacy and ineffability of the self, with *Hamlet*; or to understand whether and how far successful parenting requires the willingness to engage with, and not repudiate, the childlike parts of the self, with *King Lear*. We would do well to engage with these works because they provide us with experiences that are epistemically relevant to our search.

That is a very general claim, as it should be, avoiding any narrowly reductive account of literary meaning. But the claim is so general that it risks vacuity. It must be immediately backed up by detailed readings that again and again make good on the promise of new understanding, returning in each case to the question, what have we learned from the specifically literary quality of the works? At the heart of Zamir's book are three chapters on erotic love in *Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Othello*. He prefaces his readings by pointing to the great difficulties that philosophy has had investigating love, especially erotic love; and he suggests that only works that convey to their reader the texture of complex human experiences, with all their internal tensions and contradictions, will put us in a position to make any philosophical claims at all.

Romeo and Juliet conveys the hyperbolic, extravagant, and rather abstract character of young love, with its focus on a generalized and aestheticized image of the body ("I ne'er saw true beauty till this night"), and its humorless mutual absorption, its search for a transcendence of mere earthly humanity. Juliet is the sun, her eyes "two of the fairest stars in all the heaven." She is a "bright angel," soaring above the heads of mere mortals. This sort of love, Zamir shows, works by distancing, and even bracketing, reality; it is actively hostile to fact and evidence. Since it is determined to rise above the earth, it is also lacking in particularity: Juliet is an abstract image, an angel, and neither Romeo nor the audience knows a great deal about the earthly attributes that distinguish her from others.

One sign of these qualities in their love is the play's constant fascination with images of sleep and dreaming. Like many critics before him, Zamir notices that the play itself draws readers into a lulled and dreamy state. Such a state might be seen as mere forgetfulness; it might also be seen as infantile narcissism. Zamir rejects both these interpretations in favor of one that focuses on the transfiguring experience of the perception of beauty: "Love in the play is not only an abandonment of the world, a dim or foggy experience, but also a penetration of it through heightened perception." By allowing ourselves to be drawn into this complex state, we instantiate, and learn more fully to understand, our own relationship to aesthetic beauty, and to the blindness to daily life that its perception frequently involves.

By contrast—in what for me is Zamir's most fascinating chapter—*Antony and Cleopatra* depicts "mature love," love between people who enjoy being grown-ups together, and who have no project of transcending human life, because they are taking too much pleasure in life as it is. Romeo and Juliet do not eat; Antony and Cleopatra eat all the time. Romeo and Juliet have no occupation; Antony and Cleopatra are friends and supportive colleagues with a great deal of work to do running their respective and interlocking empires. Romeo and Juliet have no sense of humor; Antony and Cleopatra live by elaborate jokes and highly personal forms of teasing—what Zamir calls "idiosyncratic practices." ("That time,—Oh times!—I laugh'd him out of patience…") Romeo and Juliet, utterly absorbed, pay no attention to anybody around them; Antony and Cleopatra love to gossip about the odd people in their world, and spend evenings wandering through the streets watching the funny things people do. Romeo and Juliet speak to each other only in terms of worshipful hyperbole; Antony knows how to make contact with Cleopatra through insults, even about her age (he calls her his "serpent of old Nile"), and she knows how to turn a story about a fishhook into a running joke that renews laughter each time it is mentioned. All this suggests a romance that, unlike that of the younger couple, "does not work through transcending life, through perpetually setting its intensities at odds with what life is, but rather structures itself through life and the daily pleasures it affords."

It's not that they do not pay attention to each other's bodies, says Zamir—but in contrast to the teenage lovers, the body in *Antony and Cleopatra* is always seen as animated by a searching and idiosyncratic mind that makes contact with another particular mind through intimate conversation. Cleopatra is clearly

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supposed to be attractive, but, as Zamir notes, the play, by contrast to Shakespeare's sources, downplays this aspect of her attraction. It is her complicated personality, full of surprises, to which Shakespeare most draws our attention. ("Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety.") Her mode of seduction, in Zamir's persuasive reading, is above all mental. "Cunning past man's thought," as Antony describes her, she ingeniously elaborates a battery of stratagems to keep herself in the forefront of his attention: flirtation, capricious annoyance, the constant private teasing, frustrating allusions to significant undelivered information—but also shared ambition, trusting collaboration, sincere and deeply felt admiration for his achievements, and insistence on her own equality. (When Charmian advises deference and flattery, Cleopatra is appropriately contemptuous: "Thou teachest like a fool; the way to lose him.") Zamir is particularly insightful, and adds something that I believe to be new in the literature on the play, when, examining the scene after the battle of Actium, he shows the love expressed in Cleopatra's delicate attunement to the phases of Antony's career, her subtle sense of when to approach him and of what should and should not be said. I do not know another critic who gives Cleopatra the credit for empathy that she plainly deserves.

But does she really love Antony? The question is Zamir's. In part because many critics do not like Cleopatra, feeling that any such complicated, capricious, and powerful woman must be incapable of love, Zamir feels compelled to press this question repeatedly. He seems to have a hard time trusting the reality of this middle-aged love, so lacking in outsize rapture, so immersed in the daily movement of work and conversation. Zamir eventually finds an affirmative answer to his question in the scene in which news of Antony's marriage to Octavia is delivered to Cleopatra by a messenger—whom she first upbraids and then, in a bizarre tantrum, drags physically around the room by his hair. (Stage direction: "She hales him up and down.") Her angry reaction, says Zamir, must convince "even the most suspicious of audiences that this woman's love … is genuine." And here, I think, Zamir missteps: he reads Cleopatra's reaction as a pure case of erotic jealousy. But of course it cannot be that, since Cleopatra knows that the marriage is politically motivated, and not at all based on overwhelming passion. And she intuits quickly that Octavia is no rival in brains or fascination.

Zamir himself makes much of the fact that Octavia is later described as "of a holy, cold, and still conversation." With her "modest eyes / And still conclusion," she "shows a body rather than a life." (In fairness to Octavia, we should observe that, though the first of these judgments comes from the relatively impartial Enobarbus, the second remarkable insult is uttered by Cleopatra herself, and the third by that same messenger, no doubt averse to a second "haling," and happy to echo exactly what Cleopatra wishes to think about Antony's marital relationship.) So jealousy, focused on the sexuality and spirit of the rival, is not what her emotion is about. She does eventually get around to asking what Octavia looks like, at the end of this scene and in a later one, but it is an afterthought, well after the unfortunate messenger has been dragged about, and after she has asked him, three times, "He is married?"

So it is clearly the fact of marriage, and not the particularity of the wife, that is the target of her fury. This formidable woman, powerful, unique, who has wit, achievement, success, and glamour, who rules a kingdom, who seems an utter stranger to banality—this woman suddenly sees that she is circumscribed by the world's most banal form of power. This fact seems to her so completely outrageous and absurd that she can react

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only by behaving in an absurd, even infantile, way. Zamir is correct, then, that she does love him—but it is not jealousy that is the proof, it is her regal intolerance of mere social impediments, and, far more, her utterly submissive tolerance of them, as she accepts and lives with the limitations entailed by the news, whatever they may ultimately turn out to be. (But does she really accept limitation, or is all that dragging by the hair, that funny threat to put the messenger in brine and turn him into a pickle, itself one more outsize joke, a theatrical display of determination and indomitability? Cleopatra is certainly capable of games more elaborate by far. An actress might play the scene in many ways.)

Romeo and Juliet's love transfigured the world by raising love into the heavens: Juliet is the sun, and, as with the sun, we have no idea what, if anything, makes her laugh. Antony and Cleopatra transfigure the world from within, making each daily experience more vivid, funny, and surprising. Without each other, the world is sadly boring. "Shall I abide / In this dull world," she asks him as he dies, "which in thy absence is / No better than a sty?" What is piggish, in her view, is not the body, it is the absence of interesting conversation. So the world needs to be transfigured here, too, but the transfiguration is human and particular, rather than celestial and abstract.

What does all this have to do with philosophy? Well, in the first place, no philosopher has ever given a decent account of the complexities of "mature love." (John Stuart Mill's letters and autobiography come close, but they are not philosophical works, and Mill, despite his many virtues, is not exactly the man to describe the role of jokes and erotic teasing in love.) Nor is this failure just an accident, or a social fact about cultural reticence. Zamir plausibly argues that philosophical prose all by itself could not convey the quirky and uneven nature, the incommensurable particularity, of this type of love, the way genuine feeling is embodied in a fish story. And so he contends that the experience of the spectator or reader, as she goes through the variegated moods of this relationship, is epistemically significant, putting her in a position to make claims about love, and to assess claims about love, as no abstract account could do.

III.

If Antony and Cleopatra's love faced fatal political and military obstacles and was for that reason tragic, wrecked on "the varying shore o' the world," still there is nothing fundamentally tragic in the texture of the love itself, which is at its heart more akin to comedy. In *Othello*, by contrast, Zamir finds a love that is tragic at its core, fated for violent death—because of one party's determination to see and to deeply love, and the other party's horror of being seen and being deeply loved.

Any successful interpretation of *Othello* must explain Othello's readiness to be deceived. Iago is certainly skillful, but he has an all-too-willing victim. At every point, Othello picks up Iago's suggestions and runs with them. No other character, despite receiving the same information, shows the slightest inclination to believe that Desdemona is unfaithful. Here McGinn writes his best chapter, showing how the play takes the classical philosophical problem of the knowledge of other minds and displays its agonizing human reality—but, focusing on enumerating passages that highlight epistemological themes, he does not finally show us why Othello is driven mad by this problem in a way that other characters are not. Some interpreters impute the Moor's collaboration with his tormentor Iago to his racial insecurity in a society that stigmatizes him. Yet this suggestion by itself does not tell us why the insecurity should take the form of sexual jealousy and ultimately violence—especially violence directed against the one person who appears to have no awareness of his racial difference. ("I saw Othello's visage in his mind.")

Stanley Cavell's famous interpretation goes further. Othello, he believes, has become heavily invested in the idea of his own purity, a project no doubt supported by his awareness of being black, and a Moor, in a white Christian world. So, says Cavell, when Othello makes love to Desdemona and sees the passion he arouses in her, he cannot bear it, because this passionate response proves to him that he is a sexual being, not a pure heavenly will. Cavell's sentences express, in their haunted and hesitant structure, the torment of that discovery:

> In speaking of the point and meaning of Othello's impotence, I do not think of Othello as having been in an everyday sense impotent with Desdemona. I think of him, rather, as having been surprised by her, at what he has elicited from her; at, so to speak, a success, rather than a failure.... Rather than imagine himself to have elicited that, or solicited it, Othello would imagine it elicited by anyone and everyone else. —Surprised, let me say, to find that she is flesh and blood. It was the one thing he could not imagine for himself. For if she is flesh and blood then, since they are one, so is he.

Cavell then generalizes, in a memorable observation: "If such a man as Othello is rendered impotent and murderous by aroused, or by having aroused, female sexuality; or let us say: if this man is horrified by human sexuality, in himself and in others; then no human being is free of this possibility." Sexuality, Cavell continues, is the field in which the idea of human finitude, "of its acceptance and its repetitious overcoming," is worked out. In other words, we are all to some degree ashamed and horrified at our own sexuality, of which another person's sexual response to us is the proof. We are horrified because we wish not to accept our finitude. We wish to be pure souls without limit or imperfection.

Cavell's essay is one of the best things written about the play, and one of his own best essays, haunting and devastating to experience. I recall the sense of sudden revelation that swept over all of us when Cavell first presented it in a class I taught with him at Harvard in 1980. But now, with the distance of time, I must say that what Cavell is describing looks to me not like a universal human reality, but like a common style of misogyny, in which people—usually males—have a stake in

Sea-Change

We slip under the skin
of ocean, slide into
the brine, float belly-down.

A Barracuda scours.
Gold dangles: fishing lures.
Blue Tang scuttle in sync.

Further below a Tarpon,
lengthy as any man,
cruises the sand-floor. Mothers,

we hover: blue fins wave
while hair ripples, escaping.
Will he doubt our authority?

Dripping, we pull our weight
onto the deck. Bats plunge.
Clouds tinge coral. We raise

our young to know the ocean
heaves every grain. Night falls.
Suspended between timber

and foam, buoyed, then dropped,
we pitch, catch hold. The sea
cradles the sighing hull.

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being above the merely bodily, and find themselves reminded by women's sexuality that they are not in that way lofty. But this sort of shame and revulsion at sexuality is hardly inevitable. Why on earth should one think that "no human being is free of this possibility"? (Antony and Cleopatra are utterly free of this type of disgust-misogyny. What disgusts her, and turns the world into a "sty," is the absence of humor, not the presence of the body.) As a reading of the play, Cavell's assimilation of *Othello* to *The Kreutzer Sonata* is much too quick, neglecting the fact that Desdemona's primary mode of interaction with Othello is not sexual rapture but compassionate understanding, directed at the suffering that he has experienced during his exploits.

Here is where Zamir gets going, in another wonderful chapter. Othello, he argues, has become deeply invested in seeing himself as identical with his heroic role. He *is* that outsize hero, and the vulnerable shapeless person within has been concealed by that grandiose construction, to such an extent that Othello himself does not even remember that he really is that vulnerable inchoate self. Desdemona sees past the persona to the self within: she recognizes, and pities, his vulnerability. Othello is erotically drawn to her by her compassionate response: "Othello falls in love when he encounters pity directed at him, when, for a change, he is not being used but is understood." But committed as he is to invulnerability, to being nothing more nor less than the grand heroic construct, he simply cannot stand the loving knowing gaze that reaches past his achievements to "some deeper foundation of his being," "an unbearable penetrating love that sees through to his source." He has to extinguish the eyes that see him, and love him, too deeply. "In his growing abuse of her, Othello wants this kind of love to stop somehow."

In other words, the general human problem raised by the play is the problem of the "false self" (Winnicott's term) with which we so often mask our real, childlike selves. All human beings have this problem to some degree, wanting to hide from the gaze of those who see our vulnerability too clearly (although it is also seductive to be so seen). For some people, however, the problem is more agonizing than for others, because some people have become so invested in being competent and in control that they have not attended to their inner selves or cultivated the emotional and receptive parts of their personalities. The result is that the true self, the one within, remains in an infantile condition, and the controlling adult has little conscious access to it. When it is seen and addressed, it can be a terrifying experience.

Zamir does not make use of Winnicott's concepts, but that is how I would make sense of his shrewd suggestions. Still, his reading has a harder time than Cavell's in making sense of the sexual form that Othello's fantasies take. For Cavell, "rather than imagine himself to have elicited that, or solicited it, Othello would imagine it elicited by anyone and everyone else." Moreover, the very fact that Desdemona is aroused means, for him, that she is a whore, to be distanced from the self who is striving for purity. (Misogyny often works this way, by projecting the feared and loathed aspects of the self onto others: she, not I, is the body; she, not I, is an animal being.)

How would Zamir, by contrast, make sense of Othello's sexual focus? He would say, I suppose, that by portraying his wife to himself as a whore, attending to many men, Othello can deny that she is focused all too intently on loving him. "Iago," says Zamir, is Othello's "mode of resistance and something in him is using Iago so that it can bloom to full expression." What he cannot stand is the real love that she offers, and so he would prefer to believe anything else. I am not entirely satisfied with such an account of Othello's obsessively sexual fantasies, and I wish that Zamir had said more about this issue.

Yet Zamir's reading is very strong in explaining Othello's odd and disjointed language in the murder scene, in which a carefully constructed persona has unraveled and he no longer knows where or what his selfhood is. He speaks in strange third-person abstractions. He seems to have lost hold of his "I." ("It is the cause, my soul.") Above all, Zamir makes better sense than Cavell of Othello's obsession with extinguishing Desdemona's vision: "Put out the light, and then put out the light." And later, "This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven." On Cavell's reading, he should be obsessed with her bodily movements, her sexual organs. Zamir convincingly shows us why he is so afraid of her eyes.

Zamir simply offers, side by side, his readings of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*. He draws no explicit conclusion from the juxtaposition, but these readings, juxtaposed, make us wonder why Antony and Cleopatra do not fall prey to the same romantic agony. It's not that they do not feel jealousy—but the jealousy that they know is of a limited and daily sort, not monstrous or murderous. The answer, it would appear, is given by Zamir's fine passages on their "idiosyncratic practices": they are willing to acknowledge what is uneven, silly, and odd about the self—to let it be seen, to let it be. In their way highly regal and heroic, they have no stake in being only that. The most intelligent and commanding woman in all of Shakespeare, Cleopatra is also one of the silliest and most childlike—and it is this capacity for allowing silliness to be seen that is their personal salvation and, by its absence, Othello's doom.

Zamir's book has its defects. Like many first books, it opens up more questions than it pursues. It lacks, to some extent, what Cavell always gives us: the sense of a coherent and distinctive philosophical sensibility with its own well-thought-out views on the significant questions. Yet those faults can also be seen as virtues: openness rather than dogmatism; a willingness to be puzzled rather than to assert; an acknowledgment that the world, and Shakespeare, does not fit into a single tidy philosophical picture. Nuttall and McGinn fail because they make Shakespeare look simple, reducing him to a primer. Cavell brilliantly succeeds at being Cavell, which is to say that his readings always illuminate issues of human significance; but one often has the sense that the plays are being used as occasions for the pursuit of Cavell's own preoccupations. In Zamir, however, the plays challenge the philosopher to new thought. Zamir's approach is respectful of mystery and complexity, and always suggests that the plays contain more than his interpretations have elicited.

To write philosophically about Shakespeare, or any other great author or artist, one needs not so much philosophical learning, or even philosophical argument, but a genuinely philosophical temperament, puzzled and even humble before life's complexities, and willing to put one's sense of life on the line in the process of reading a text. As Plato rightly said, it is no chance matter that we are discussing, but how one should live. The philosopher needs to turn to literature because literature gets at depths of human experience, tragic or comic, that philosophical prose does not reach; but then the philosopher will need to show the imprint of that complexity, to reveal something of the pain or the joy that the work evokes from his or her own character. *Double Vision* owes its success precisely to this capacity for philosophical puzzlement, for laying the plays newly open both to emotional experience and to serious reflection. ◆

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Benny Morris

THE TANGLED TRUTH

ARMY OF SHADOWS: PALESTINIAN COLLABORATION WITH ZIONISM, 1917–1948
By Hillel Cohen
Translated by Haim Watzman
(University of California Press, 344 pp., $29.95)

I.

THE HILLS OF THE West Bank—Judea and Samaria—are dotted with well-ordered, red-roofed Jewish settlements. Clearly, they make the partition of the land of Israel/Palestine into two states more difficult, and as such they constitute an obstacle to peace. This is certainly the view in Washington, Brussels, and Tel Aviv, the bastion of center-left Israel. But for most Palestinians (who, incidentally, do not really want a two-state settlement—*vide* their support of Hamas in the elections in 2006), the settlements represent something far more sinister. They are highly visible agents and symbols of Israel's design to steal their land.

The plain fact is that the West Bank settlements were largely built by Palestinian Arab laborers, who continue to construct buildings, security walls, tunnels, and bypass roads that daily reinforce Israel's settlement enterprise and thus its grip on the territory. These workers—two generations of them since the summer of 1967, when the settlement venture was launched—reluctantly or eagerly took up their jobs in order to feed their families, putting personal need before collective interest. And the Palestinian political parties and armed factions, overcoming some initial unease, failed to interfere with and never tried to halt their work, even as these laborers were building the very "facts on the ground" that their national leadership—and, more generally, the Arab world and its supporters around the globe—were denouncing as evil. Over the same decades, dozens of Palestinians have been shot dead or maimed by fellow Arabs for selling or facilitating the sale of buildings and land to Jews—the very same land on which some of the settlements were later constructed. (Other settlements were constructed on state land.)

Encapsulated in this apparent illogic is an ambivalence that, throughout the history of the conflict, has marked Palestinian Arab attitudes toward cooperation, indeed collaboration, with the Zionists. On the one hand, there always were Arabs, in very large numbers, ready to sell their labor and land to the Jews, and to inform on Arab militants, and even to fight their fellow Arabs who were fighting the Jews (and the British, who were regarded as the Zionists' patrons). On the other hand, Arabs were willing to battle against land sales and cooperation with the Jews, and to kill Jews (and Britons) and collaborators. And sometimes it was the very same people, at one and the same time or within a short span of years, who hotly denounced Zionism and secretly helped the Jews. (The Nazi German consul in Jerusalem, Heinrich Wolff, in 1933 contemptuously cabled Berlin that these nationalists "in daylight were crying out against Jewish immigration and in the darkness of the night were selling land to the Jews.")

In his important book, Hillel Cohen, the author of fine studies of Israel's Arab minority, succeeds in presenting an objective view of "collaboration," ignoring for the purposes of analysis the bad name that the phenomenon received during and after World War II. Cohen is not interested here in the moral dimensions of collaboration, and indeed treason. His perspective—and this is one of his book's strengths—is neither pro-Palestinian nor anti-Palestinian, neither pro-Zionist nor anti-Zionist. Cohen argues—with Talleyrand, who famously quipped that "treason is a matter of dates"—that "treason is ultimately a social construct. Definitions vary with circumstances," and "collaboration" is "in the eye of the beholder." So Cohen leaves "the moral and political judgment" to his readers. He buttresses his argument with the observation that Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem and the leader of the Palestine Arab national movement during the 1930s and 1940s, called "traitors" not only those who cooperated with the Jews and the British, but also those who stood aside and were neutral in the Arab-Zionist and Arab-British struggles, as well as those who opposed his and his party's dominance of the national movement. Husseini, a nasty piece of work by all Arab, Jewish, and British accounts, brandished the epithet "traitor" at the drop of a hat, and routinely ordered the assassination of his political opponents.

Already by the late 1920s, Cohen writes, "the definition of treason" had been so broadened as "to include all those who opposed the hegemonic nationalist al-Husseini faction." So in 1927 one anti-Husseini newspaper quipped: "Were we to enumerate the number of traitors in the country in accordance with some of the newspapers, more than half of the country's inhabitants would be traitors." Husseini, as Cohen implies, appears to have been driven by personal and familial interests, like many of the collaborators whom he lambasted; he often put his own position in Palestinian politics above what could objectively be called the "national" interest. This was glaringly apparent, even to some of his astonished supporters, in May 1939, when he rejected the British White Paper that reneged on the Balfour Declaration and in effect promised the Arabs majority rule and independence within a decade. For Husseini, the document was problematic because it did not place him at the helm of the future Palestinian state.

Already in the 1920s, Husseini began calling his opponents, primarily the notables of the rival Nashashibi clan, "traitors"—this at a time when there were no clear policy differences between them. (Both the Husseinis and the Nashashibis wanted all of Palestine for the Arabs, opposed all Jewish immigration, regarded the Zionists as aggressive usurpers, and so on.) Cohen argues that the Husseinis' routine use of the terms "traitor" and "collaborator" denuded them of all moral weight or political significance. And in the long perspective of history, who is to say whether the man who advocated the bloody, abortive rebellion against the British in 1936–1939, which resulted in the impoverishment of Palestine's Arabs and the weakening of their national movement, was more of a "nationalist" or less of a "traitor" to the Palestinian cause than he who, calculating more accurately, advocated an early cessation of violence and cooperation with the British authorities (and, temporarily, even with the Zionists) in the interests of Palestinian well-being?

The value of Cohen's erudite book lies in its meticulous recounting of the history of Arab-Zionist cooperation and collaboration, period by period, region by region, family by family. There are many eye-opening—and pathetic—tales, often well-told. Cohen has culled the relevant

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archives—the archives of the IDF and the main pre-state militia, the Haganah; the Central Zionist Archive; the Public Record Office in London (for some reason, perhaps to sow confusion, now named, like the American archive in Washington, the National Archive); and also Arab memoirs and newspapers. (There are no open Arab archives to speak of.) The picture presented is thorough and fair and persuasive.

Cohen describes the various types and gradations of collaboration, ranging from socializing with Jewish co-workers and buying Jewish products to working Jewish fields to actively supporting the Zionist cause with intelligence, weaponry, and even combat against fellow Arabs during the years of British rule and in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. During that war, for example, the Druze communities of the Galilee and Mount Carmel eventually threw in their lot with the Israelis—a Druze unit fought alongside Israeli troops against Palestinian irregulars and the Arab Liberation Army, and the Arab al-Heib, a northern Bedouin tribe, formed a small unit under Jewish command that raided Arab villages and militia bases. Both were driven by a cold calculus of profit and loss.

Israeli soldier meets with Arabs, Majdal (Ashkelon), November, 1948

A major area of cooperation or collaboration, dating from the start of the Zionist enterprise in the 1880s, was Arab land sales to the Zionist movement—a phenomenon that permanently blighted Palestinian Arab nationalism, sowing suspicion, confusion, and moral disarray. By the end of 1947, Zionist institutions and individual Jews had bought close to 7 percent of Palestine's land surface (which, in all, encompassed 10,000 square miles or 26,000 square kilometers). Almost all the purchases had been from Arabs. (A small quantity of land was bought from Europeans.) Most of the land was purchased from rich absentee Arab landowners, or *effendi*, who lived in big cities in Palestine or abroad, though many tracts, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, were sold to the Jews by smallholders. "Thousands of Palestinians sold land to Jews during the Mandate," asserts Cohen. He may be slightly exaggerating; but it was this land that made possible the grid of Jewish settlements that served as the core and the shield of the state that was established in 1948.

From the start, both the Arabs and the Zionists understood that legal possession of land "was a necessary condition for realizing [each of] their national idea[s]." Already in 1911, a Jerusalem mathematics teacher named Mustafa Effendi Tamr published an article denouncing Arab land-sellers: "You are selling the property of your fathers and grandfathers for a pittance to people who will have no pity on you, to those who will act to expel you and expunge your memory from your habitations and disperse you among the nations. This is a crime that will be recorded in your names in history, a black stain and disgrace that your descendants will bear, which will not be expunged even after years and eras have gone by." Cohen remarks that "opposition to land sales was one of the principal focal points around which the Arab national idea in Palestine coalesced. It was the place where the national idea adopted by the urban elite intersected with the villagers' fears that the Jews would buy up more land and dispossess them."

But not all Palestinian Arabs saw things this way. Some simply preferred to make a buck; and many were driven by debt. Some played both ends, selling land to Jews and helping the Zionists in other ways even as they were loudly propagating Arab nationalism, such as Tulkarem's mayor Abd al-Rahman al-Hajj Ibrahim and his family. Ali al-Qasem, al-Hajj Ibrahim's son-in-law, "vandalized Jewish citrus groves" but also helped track down the murderers of a Jewish couple in 1931. Later he speculated in land and was a major Haganah intelligence asset—while also serving as an Arab intelligence operative—until he was executed by the IDF Intelligence Service in December, 1948. His liquidation without legal sanction led to the trial and then the dismissal of Issar Beeri, the IDF's commander, by David Ben-Gurion.

What will rivet the attention of many readers are Cohen's penetrating, though sometimes speculative, portrayals of what drove various collaborators. Money, or other material benefit, "was not the only reason," he repeatedly stresses. Many Palestinian Arabs saw close relations with the Zionists as a way to gain favor with, or favors from, the British, whom Arabs universally saw in 1917 (when such a view was correct) and in 1947 (by which time it was absurd) as the patrons and the guardians of Zionism. For many collaborators, it was not a personal matter: they believed that cooperation with the Jews would gain "communal" benefits for their clan, village, and tribe. Others had "nationalist" motives: they believed, simply, that the Zionists were on a roll and that prudence demanded that, for the good of Palestine's Arabs, they side with the future victors. Some were repelled by the methods of the mainstream Husseini nationalists, which included substantial reliance upon intimidation and terrorism. Still others had Jewish friends or admired the Jews. Many collaborators acted out of some combination of all these reasons.

It is relatively easy to trace the spoor of those motivated by personal interest, especially pecuniary gain. Sheikh Taher al-Husseini, the nephew of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, contacted the Zionist officials Chaim Margaliot Kalvarisky and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi simply because he wanted Hajj Amin's job as mufti of Jerusalem. Later Taher's son, Zein al-Din al-Husseini, sold land to the Jews. But for many others, especially from the middle and upper classes, the motivating factor was a

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realistic assessment of the balance of forces. (Cohen projects this type of thinking onto the 1970s, when, he argues, Palestinian national interests required *summud*—attachment to, and staying put on, the land, even if this necessitated a certain amount of cooperation with the Israeli rulers. For this reason, the construction of Israeli settlements, which would help Palestinians feed themselves and stubbornly remain in their locations, could be seen as an alternative "nationalist" strategy and not as "collaboration.")

A few were driven by a sympathy for the Zionist cause and an appreciation of Zionist achievements, though almost none agreed to Zionist dominance or to Jewish statehood alongside a Palestinian state in a partition settlement. Hasan Shukri, the Arab mayor of Haifa during World War I and again in the years between 1927 and 1940, cabled the British government in 1921 denouncing those Arab nationalists who demanded that Britain renounce Zionism: "We do not consider the Jewish people as an enemy.... We consider the Jews as a brotherly people sharing our joys and troubles and helping us in the construction of our common country. We are certain that without Jewish immigration and financial assistance there will be no future development of our country as may be judged from the fact that the towns inhabited in part by Jews such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Tiberias are making steady progress while Nablus, Acre and Nazareth where no Jews reside are steadily declining." Another public figure, Muhammad Tawil of Acre, wrote: "I cannot recognize Hajj Amin al-Husseini as the leader of Palestine because his direction has brought no benefit to the country"—though he later became disaffected with the Zionists who had employed and then discarded him, pointing to a phenomenon that, sadly, would characterize Zionist–collaborator relations down the decades. (This ugly phenomenon survives in the abandonment of some South Lebanese Army veterans after the final IDF pullout from Lebanon in 2000.)

Some Palestinian collaborators were animated by personal friendship, empathy with Jews, or even ideological sympathy. Ezra Danin, one of the founders of the HIS (Haganah Intelligence Service), recalled in his memoirs an Arab who was employed as a guard in a Jewish-owned citrus grove and was involved in land sales on the side: "He believed in the return to Zion and wanted cooperation with the Jews.... I remember an instance in which I once said to him: 'You do it for the money, of course. [So] why do you get so angry if they tell you that you are a hired spy?' He said: 'I for money? I work only for the idea.'" The principle of good neighborliness, a time-honored Arab tradition, also played a part. Some Hebron Arabs, including Ahmad Rashid al-Hirbawi, the president of the town's chamber of commerce, supported—against Husseini's line—the return of Jews to the town after the massacre of 1929, when they had abandoned it.

A fair number were driven to collaborate with the Zionists—and the British—by a desire for revenge against a particular leader (especially Hajj Amin al-Husseini), or an armed band or political party that had harmed them or their kin or deprived them of what they regarded as their due. Omar Sidqi al-Dajani became a significant HIS agent after his father, the Jerusalem notable Hassan Sidqi al-Dajani, was murdered by the mufti's operatives. Aptly, in HIS signals Omar was codenamed "*hayatom*," the orphan. He was to be of major political assistance to the Jewish Agency, providing reports about the thinking and the activities of the Arab delegations during the proceedings at the United Nations leading up to the partition resolution of November 1947. Inter-Arab feuding between clans or villages and the need for outside assistance, in weapons or funds, also sometimes led to cooperation with the Zionists. And Cohen notes finally that several collaborators were motivated, once they had embarked on an anti-Husseini course, simply by the "drive to succeed."

Regarding Zionism, Cohen divides the Palestinians during the Mandate years—they numbered about one million in 1936 and 1.3 million in 1948—roughly into two camps: the Husseini-led "mainstream national movement," which fought Zionism to the bitter end, and those who "believed that the Zionists could not be defeated and that the common good of Palestinian Arabs demanded coexistence." Put another way, there was a "discourse of justice" (all of Palestine should remain Arab) and a "discourse of the possible" (allowing for some form of co-existence). This was true in the period between 1917 and 1947 and during the 1948 war. Much of the Nashashibi-led opposition, which tried to win over the Palestinian masses and depose Husseini from the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council (the British-established body that oversaw religious schools, mosques, cemeteries, and other Muslim trust assets), adhered to the second view, though they were by no means "Zionists" or supportive of the establishment of a Jewish state.

The Husseinis began to punish "traitors"—sellers of land, informers, those socializing with Jews—as early as the 1920s. The first murder of a public figure occurred in 1929, near the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem. Sheikh Musa Hadeib hailed from the village of Duwaimah, in the Hebron foothills, and he may have sold land to the Jews. But his chief sin was political: he spoke out in favor of the British Mandate, and he had once hosted the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. He had also helped to found the Zionist-supported "Muslim National Associations" in the 1920s, as a counterweight to the Muslim-Christian associations that were hotbeds of anti-Zionist nationalist agitation; and he headed the Mount Hebron farmers' party, one of the rural associations set up with Zionist aid to counter the urban-based nationalists. His killers, according to Zionist intelligence, were three men dressed as women, from the Maraqa clan of Hebron. The killing occurred in October, less than two months after the wave of anti-Jewish pogroms that swept the country—"the 1929 Disturbances," as the British (and the Zionists) called them, though in the collective memory of the Arabs they are known as the first "Arab Revolt"—which were triggered by Arab fears, methodically stirred up by Hajj Amin al-Husseini, that the Jews intended to "take control of" the Temple Mount, or al-Haram al-Sharif, and destroy the two sacred mosques in the compound, Al Aksa and the Dome of the Rock.

By the mid-1930s, the Husseinis had discarded all inhibitions (such as the traditional fear that a murder would spark an open-ended blood feud with the victim's clan). The first murder of a land speculator, or *simsar*, was recorded in November 1934, with the shooting of Saleh Isa Hamdan, of Lifta, outside Jerusalem. The killers are "people extremely close to Hajj Amin," the police reported. During the rebellion of 1936–1939, when Husseini assassinations of political opponents and anyone suspected of any type of collaboration crested, about 1,000 Arabs were killed by fellow Arabs, about 500 of them in 1938 alone. (By comparison, about 1,100 Arab rebels were killed in 1938 by British, Zionist, and anti-rebel Arab forces.) By 1939, the Husseinis were paying 100 Palestine pounds to operatives for the killing of high-level "traitors" and 25

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pounds for lower-level "traitors." Killers of Jews earned only 10 pounds. Perhaps this partly explains why "only" some 500 Jews were killed in the course of the revolt.

The Husseini murder campaign drove many in the opposition—who until mid- or late 1937 had supported the rebellion—into the arms of the British and, more hesitantly, the Zionists. The head of the Nashashibi clan, Ragheb Nashashibi, and his nephew, Fakhri al-Nashashibi, began to seek British and Zionist help, in money, arms, and intelligence, and in 1938 helped to establish the so-called rural "peace bands," armed bands that fought against rebel bands, sometimes alongside British troops. Often the peace bands and the opposition operatives supplied the British with information that led to the destruction of rebel bands; less often, they took money from the Jewish Agency to support their activities.

Cohen points out that very few Palestinians rallied to the colors in 1948 and actually fought against the Yishuv. This was one reason for their defeat. He attributes this to a lack of enthusiasm to fight, or at least to fight for a lost cause. The Zionists, many Palestinians felt, were unbeatable. But he fails to note that the failure and the cost of the 1936–1939 rebellion—in which the British crushed the Palestinian national movement, killed thousands of its activists, and eviscerated its leadership—had so thoroughly disheartened the Palestinians that when the test of battle came in 1947–1948, they were unwilling to join in.

To be sure, the Zionist institutions—the Arab Bureau, which ran the initial intelligence networks in the 1920s, the Jewish Agency Political Department's Arab Division, and the HIS—exploited inter-Arab divisions and feuds between Christians and Muslims, Bedouins and farmers, and neighboring villages and clans, as well as human weaknesses, to recruit agents and gather intelligence. Cohen relates the story of a middle-aged Arab shepherd and his recruitment by a shepherd from Kibbutz Givat Hayyim named Parneto Klein in 1936, at the start of the Arab Revolt. The Arab shepherd was unmarried because he could not afford to pay the bride's dowry. Klein made him a proposal: "You, a miserable beggar, will never be able to save enough money to buy a young woman like you want, and in the meantime, you, God forbid, commit the sin of bestiality.... But if you provide us with news about what goes on in al-Qawuqji's camp ... we will give you money and you can finally buy a woman." (Fawzi al-Qawuqji, a Lebanese-Syrian army officer, commanded a band of foreign fighters who fought the British in northern Samaria during the revolt.)

And so it was. Later, when the shepherd proved unable on the wedding night to consummate his marriage, Danin sent him a Jewish doctor "who gave him an injection to improve his performance and preserve his honor." This only reinforced the shepherd's loyalty to his Jewish controllers. The Zionist intelligence chiefs, like case officers the world over, often looked for and recruited lowlifes. As Danin put it in his autobiography: "Types generally exploitable for intelligence work are rebellious sons, thieves who have brought disgrace on their families, rapists who have acted on their passions and fled the avengers of tainted honor."

Another motive for Palestinian collaboration was noted by Sheikh Said Darwish of the village of al-Maliha, outside Jerusalem. He headed a clan that sold land. In explaining his actions, he once told a gathering of village elders: "You've groveled before the [urban] effendis long enough. Enough of flattering them.... Rise up and look at your situation in the rooms of the nation's house. Rise up and search for a single fellah [peasant] official

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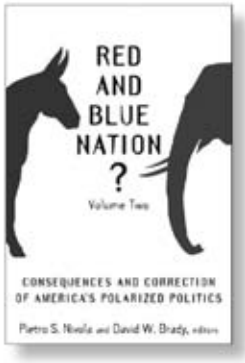
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on the Arab Executive.... Leave politics to the politicians, to those who have great fortunes and whose idleness drives them mad. We want nothing of either the Zionists or the Arab Executive.... Why don't we have governors and district officers of our own? Were we not created in the image of God? Do we lack men of wisdom and knowledge who can fill responsible positions in the service of the nation? ... The religious knowledge and wondrous sanctity [of our *ulama*—religious wise men] is greater than that of Hajj Amin al-Husseini." The Darwishes had simply had enough of the urban notables' disdain, of being pushed around.

Initially, the Zionist institutions tried to buy off Palestinian nationalism. In March 1930, the Zionist Executive allocated 50 Palestinian pounds to delegates participating in a gathering of sheikhs, representing rural *fellahin*, at Ajjur; a further sum was allocated for organizing a second rural sheikhs' meeting in Jaffa two years later. Money was given to Arab journalists to write neutral articles, or ones explicitly favoring Zionism. (One such writer was Sheikh Asad al-Shuqayri, the father of Ahmad Shuqayri, who became the founding chairman of the PLO.) But by the end of the 1930s, the heads of the Jewish Agency understood that "bribery" was no way to neutralize Palestinian nationalism. Moshe Shertok (Sharret), the head of the Jewish Agency Political Department (and, from 1948, Israel's first foreign minister), pointed out the incongruity of the Zionist movement's efforts to "turn" the Arabs: the Zionist movement was based on ideas and ideology, not on materialist considerations, but here it was trying to persuade the Arabs that it was "bringing a blessing on the Arabs of the country ... a material blessing. We are enriching the land, we are enriching them, we are raising their standard of living ... and therefore there are no contradictions between our fundamental interests and their fundamental interests.... The unrealism of this conception was evident."

Shertok correctly grasped that you cannot buy off national movements. The Zionists were not taking account of "the factors of politics, the factors of national consciousness, the factors of ethnic instinct that are at work here," he wrote in 1940. The conclusion that Shertok—and Ben-Gurion—reached, on the basis of the Revolt of 1936–1939, was that that there was indeed an Arab national movement, and that it could not be dissuaded by material benefits. Instead the Zionist enterprise had to become so strong that the Arabs would regard it as undefeatable, and so agree to compromise.

But some Arabs, it seems, were won over by Zionist achievements rather than Zionist power. Consider a letter of invitation by a group of Bedouin sheikhs in the Beit Shean (Bisan) Valley to the British high commissioner Herbert Samuel in 1923: "We don't meddle in politics.... We are simple people who live in tents and deal with our own affairs only. We agree with everything the government does.... We have seen no evil from the Jews. We have sold the American [sic] Jewish Agency some of our lands, and with the help of the money we received we are developing and cultivating the large tracts that still remain ours. We are pleased with these Jews, and we are convinced that we will work together to improve our region and to pursue our common interests." This letter, says Cohen, may have been drafted by Chaim Margaliot Kalvarisky, who simultaneously orchestrated outreach programs and ran the Arab Bureau's espionage network.

II.

Cohen's learned book, especially its lengthy citations from Zionist intelligence reports and from Arab letters and memoranda, incidentally sheds light on a rarely illumined aspect of Palestinian nationalism (and one that indirectly "explains" at least some of the collaborators). From the first, the nationalism of Palestine's Arabs was blatantly religious. Almost all the "nationalist" statements Cohen quotes were couched in religious or semi-religious terms. We are dealing here with an Islamic nationalism. Indeed, when the Palestinian national struggle turned significantly violent, against the British in 1936–1939 and against the Zionists in 1947–1948, the struggle was defined by the movement's leaders as "a religious holy war," a jihad. And those rejecting Husseini's leadership, in peacetime as in wartime, were deemed heretics as well as traitors. The gang that murdered a collaborator in Balad al-Sheikh, a village near Haifa, hung a placard in the village square reading: "We hereby inform you that on 8 March 1939, Nimer the policeman was executed ... as he betrayed his religion and his homeland.... The supreme God revealed to those who preserve their religion and their homeland that he betrayed them, and they did to him what Muslim law commands. Because the supreme and holy God said: 'Fight the heretics and hypocrites; their dwelling-place is hell.'"

This Islamism colored the Palestinian national movement from its conception. When, in 1911, the Jaffa newspaper *Filastin* attacked land-sellers, it declared: "All land belongs to God, but the land on which we live belongs to the homeland [*watan*], at the command of God." "Islam does not forgive traitors," village mukhtars were told by urban nationalists in 1920. In 1925, the mufti of Gaza, Hajj Muhammad Said al-Husseini, issued a *fatwa* forbidding land sales to Jews. The Jews, he said, were no longer a protected people (as they had been in the Islamic world during the previous thirteen centuries). Muslims who helped them were to be treated as heretics, and Christians who aided them were to be deported.

A more comprehensive *fatwa* against land sales was issued by the *ulama* (the authorities on law and religion) of Palestine in January 1935. It declared that "the seller and speculator and agent in [the sale of] the land of Palestine to Jews" abetted the prevention of "the mention of Allah's name in mosques," and accepted "the Jews as rulers," and offended "Allah and his messenger and the faithful," and betrayed "Allah and his messenger and believers." These abettors were to be cast out of the community of the faithful, "even if they are parents or children or brothers or spouses." Hajj Amin al-Husseini was the first signatory to this edict; and his name was followed by those of the muftis of Jenin, Beersheba, Nablus, Safed, and Tiberias. Cohen observes that this *fatwa* applied "the traditional [religious] concept of *khiyana*—betrayal—to traitors against the national cause."

A year later, the mufti and qadi (religious judge) of Nablus toured the neighboring villages and preached that anyone who killed a land-seller "would reside in paradise in the company of the righteous people of the world." Similarly, penitent collaborators made public professions of a clearly religious cast: "I call on Allah, may He be exalted, to bear witness ... I call on Allah and the angels and the prophets and the knights of Palestinian nationalism to bear witness that if I violate this oath, I will kill myself," declared Abd al-Fattah Darwish, of al-Maliha, in May 1936. The religious discourse prohibiting the sale of land to Jews was also adopted by the Christian Arab clergy of Palestine, no doubt under Muslim pressure. A congress of Christian clerics that same year ruled that "whoever sells or speculates in the sale of any portion of the homeland is considered the same as one who sells the place of Jesus' birth or his tomb and as such will be considered a heretic against the principles of Christianity and all believers are required to ban and interdict him." And finally, in 1947, Jamal al-Husseini, Hajj Amin's cousin and deputy, reportedly called

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for the murder of land-sellers: "Murder them, murder them. Our religion commands this and you must do as the religion commands."

THE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE underpinning Palestinian nationalism was not limited to the matter of land sales. The founding declaration of the Higher Arab Committee, the executive body chaired by Hajj Amin al-Husseini that was to lead the Palestinians both in the 1936–1939 Revolt and in the 1947–1948 war against the Yishuv, referred to the Palestinian National movement as "the holy national *jihad* movement." The following year, in July 1937, those who supported the British Peel Commission recommendations—to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states—were denounced as heretics, whereas those destroying Jewish property would be declared saints.

Ideologically, it is only a short leap from these utterances to those of the Hamas, the Islamist movement which today dominates the Palestinian political arena and Palestinian nationalism. It would appear that the secularism of Fatah, the political party led by Yasir Arafat that dominated the Palestinian national movement from the 1960s until the turn of the century, was a cultural aberration, something of an illusion, an ideological patina in part adopted by Palestinian intellectuals and politicians to win over hearts and minds in the largely secular West. And yet, when looking at footage of Arafat on his knees in a mosque at prayer, five times a day, day in, day out, and of Fatah suicide bombers on their way to destroy a bus or restaurant in downtown Tel Aviv declaiming the certainty of meeting up with virgins in paradise, one may be permitted to conclude that the secular declarations of the 1980s and 1990s were mere window dressing, and did not really reflect the spirit of Palestinian politics. And no sooner had the grand old man of Palestinian politics departed the scene than Hamas won the first—and free—Palestinian general elections in which it participated.

Cohen indirectly establishes a particular connection between collaboration and the nature of Palestinian nationalism, though he does not explicitly dwell on the matter. The ardent nationalists of the Mandate years were in large measure driven by their Islamic faith and tenets—but the collaborators often exhibited, if not outright apostasy, then at least a measure of religious (as well as nationalist-political) backsliding. Cohen relates the story of Kamel and Sharif Shanti, a leading land-selling family in Qalqilya. Tellingly, they both married Jewish women. During Ramadan 1935, Sharif reportedly broke the fast and ate during daytime in public.

In 1929, *Filastin* reported that the Zionist Congress had allocated one million pounds for the purchase of land, and commented that some "twenty people—a portion of the nation that should not be discounted—will [now] have all their worries dispelled … because the bars and dance clubs will now be wide open" to them. Another newspaper reported that "the [Jewish] city of Tel Aviv, its streets and its cafés, buzz each day with large groups of fellahin and *samasirah* [speculators] who humiliate themselves and sell the fertile lands of the foothills."

The leaders of the Bedouin Ghazawiyya tribe, the Zeinati clan, in the Beit Shean Valley sold land to the Jews and then spent their days in "endless trips to Haifa … [in] fancy hotels [and] … cafés, replacing horses with automobiles, installing a radio in their tents." All this "caused a revolution in their lives and, necessarily, their religion," a member of the neighboring Kibbutz Maoz Hayyim noted. There are reports that the Zionist land-purchasing agencies took sellers and speculators on binges in Haifa and

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Tel Aviv and provided them with women during the deal-making negotiations. And the ostentatious *samasirah* behavior triggered a vicious cycle in which they were eventually forced to sell more and more land, and help in the sale of others' lands, to maintain their new lifestyle. The outcome was predictable. The head of the Zeinati clan, Emir Muhammad, "was murdered in 1946 as he came out of a barbershop in Haifa."

So there appears to have been a correlation between irreligiosity and collaboration. Or, put another way, the more ardently religious a Palestinian Arab was, the less likely he was to collaborate with the Zionists. This was demonstrated in no uncertain terms in Israel's battle with Palestinian violence decades later: While the Israeli security services thoroughly penetrated the Fatah movement before, during, and after the First Intifada, they had great difficulty in recruiting Hamas operatives (and, incidentally, fundamentalist Hezbollah men in Lebanon).

Looking beyond the religious-secular divide, what is to be learned from the phenomenon of Palestinian collaboration? Without doubt—and Cohen is mindful of this—it reveals a basic hollowness at the heart of Palestinian nationalism. Some pointed to the widespread nature of collaborationism and deduced that "there was no Palestinian people" or Palestinian national movement. Others asserted that if there was a Palestinian national movement, it was far from enjoying mass support, and that many if not most Arabs in Palestine put personal and familial and tribal interests before national interests. Or, put another way, that the "nationalism" of many of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine was only skin deep: after all, many thousands assisted the Zionists in one way or another. Cohen is correct, I think, in asserting that the widespread phenomenon of collaboration was a "constant and sharp reminder that many Palestinian Arabs did not accept the nationalist ethos, at least not as it was formulated by the Husseinis."

In their book *The Palestinian People: A History*, Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal wrote that Palestinian nationalism can be traced back to 1834, when a group of peasants in the Nablus area rebelled against their then-Egyptian rulers. Most historians disagree, and locate the birth of Palestinian Arab nationalism in the 1920s (and the start of general Arab nationalism only a few years before). But for years thereafter, Palestinian Arab nationalism remained the purview of middle- and upper-class families. Most peasants, and perhaps many among the urban poor as well—together, some 80 percent of the Palestine Arabs—lacked political consciousness or a "national" ideology. The masses could be periodically stirred to action by religious rhetoric (Islam certainly touched them to the quick), but this failed to bind them in a protracted political engagement, especially when the price had to be paid in blood. Cohen writes, too hesitantly in my view, that "the conduct of Palestinian society [during 1917–1948] might lead to the conclusion that … [its] national spirit was not sufficient to the task at hand."

But of course the Palestinians were to change. Indeed, the disaster and the dispersion that befell them in 1948 was itself a major milestone in the formation of a truly "national" consciousness; and the results of the war in 1967 certainly abetted this development. By the time of the intifadas, millions of Palestinians had rallied to the cause, and many thousands were prepared to engage in political action and combat, and to pay the price in blood and imprisonment. By then it was incontrovertible that there was a Palestinian people. Palestinian nationalism may not have been during the Mandate, and may not be today, quite the secular, democratic, and open nationalism of modern Western Europe; and it may still be defined in large measure by what it wishes to destroy rather than by what it hopes to build. It is intolerant, violent, and—above all—religious. But it is most certainly a variety of nationalism. ◆

Ruth Franklin

DEPRAVITY'S RAINBOW

BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN
By Charles Bock
(Random House, 417 pp., $25)

If you ate breakfast in America during the 1980s, you probably remember the milk-carton children. A face staring out next to your bowl of cereal, identified only by the barest of data—name, date of birth, height, weight, date last seen—and accompanied by the vaguely implicatory question: Have you seen this child? The best known were the victims of abduction, like six-year-old Etan Patz, the first child ever pictured on a milk carton, who vanished en route to his school bus stop in Manhattan in 1979 and was never seen again; and Polly Klaas, the twelve-year-old girl kidnapped from her bedroom in 1993 and found murdered soon after, whose parents now run a website called the Milk Carton Project with a database of missing children.

The abductees are still the focus of news stories and Amber Alerts. But—as a mother will learn in Charles Bock's magnificent first novel—the majority of missing children are runaways. In *Beautiful Children*, they include Ponyboy, who left home after the death of his little brother and makes a living as a bike messenger delivering pornographic videotapes; the vampirishly skinny Lestat, who hitchhiked across the country to visit Anne Rice's house and never returned home; and a pregnant teenager known as "Danger-Prone Daphney," who brags that her own picture was once on a milk carton. She collected them as souvenirs, but since she had nowhere to keep them, the milk quickly spoiled, and eventually she lost the empty cartons as well.

Why do children disappear? This is one of the preoccupations of Bock's novel, which centers around the disappearance of Newell Ewing, age twelve, late one summer night in the desert outside Las Vegas. Vegas is Bock's hometown, and the novel's release was accompanied by interviews and profiles in which Bock detailed his upbringing there as the son of pawnshop owners. Critics have praised the novel for its fidelity to its gritty milieu, its insider's perspective on the sordid reality behind the ersatz glitz of America's most unreal city. But this is not a thinly disguised autobiography masquerading as a novel. The surface of *Beautiful Children* is as multifaceted and glittering as a disco ball, but underneath is an utterly convincing vision of the quicksand of corruption: how quickly a person can sink into it, and how difficult it is to pull yourself out.

Of course, Bock is hardly the first writer to take an interest in the American underworld. The Beats defiantly, and sometimes beautifully, elevated the seedy into a subject for literature, and writers from John Rechy to Arthur Bradford have embraced a style that might be called grunge fiction. But the similarities between that genre and *Beautiful Children* are only superficial. Bock's novel never devolves into a freak show. His strippers and punks do not interest

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him for whatever nocturnal or countercultural glamour they might confer on his book—which, in the end, is admirably conventional, in the sense of paying respect to the essential conventions of fiction's art, to which all the most accomplished novels must somehow reconcile themselves. His characters interest him as human beings, not as evidence of a picaresque past or as markers of some kind of wild-side lifestyle. And his prose is too lucid to sink into the banal raptures of drug-induced meandering.

Like Don DeLillo, his influential predecessor in chronicling contemporary fear, Bock sounds an alarm: something is wrong in America, his novel tells us, when we allow the current conditions to exist unchallenged and unchecked. Exquisitely attuned to what is most destabilizing in our culture, he has his finger on those veins of anxiety that start deep within the individual and flow outward to create a giant societal web of unease. But while DeLillo's characters have always been stick figures frozen into various gestures of anomie, Bock animates the flamboyant structure of his novel with a dark, pulsating heart, juggling with admirable facility the contrapuntal voices and stories of more than half a dozen major characters. With its famous facsimiles of New York and Egypt and Polynesia, Las Vegas may be a giant deception in the desert, but Charles Bock is the real thing.

Like the interlocking strands of a double helix, *Beautiful Children* moves simultaneously forward and back, circling around the moment of Newell's disappearance. In the first scene, his parents, Lincoln and Lorraine, are watching a videotape of him from a recent birthday party that contains the last known images of their son—soon to be reproduced in e-mail attachments and flyers and circulated anywhere he might be seen. Then the action jumps back to the afternoon of that last day, with Newell meeting his friend Kenny at a local comics store and setting in motion the events of that night. This back-and-forth pattern plays out over the course of the novel, expanding to encompass both the future (Lincoln and Lorraine during a year of life on their own) and the past (the numerous flashbacks through which we see the characters' history), while contracting relentlessly as Newell proceeds in something like real time through the evening and night of that decisive day.

Lorraine was a showgirl whose career ended abruptly with her pregnancy at age twenty, and Lincoln is a failed baseball player who does p.r. for the Kubla Khan Hotel, one of the local pleasure domes. Loving if somewhat vapid parents, neither has much of a relationship with their hyperactive, surly, distant son. Lorraine's conversations with him are conducted mainly through the rear-view mirror. Lincoln, trying unsuccessfully to connect, takes the boy to a UNLV basketball game. In one of the novel's characteristic shifts in viewpoint, we see the scene first through the eyes of Lincoln, swallowing his disappointment as Newell scampers off with friends before the national anthem has ended. Much later, when Newell replays the same scene in his mind, we discover that the other kids are just the boy's excuse to get away: he prefers to spend the game by himself, peering down from the upper deck, sailing onto the court paper airplanes made from the pages of the expensive program his father bought him. Throughout the novel, Bock uses this disjunction between points of view to great advantage, often cutting abruptly from one character to another to show how short is the distance from one person to the next, and how deep the gulf.

To call Newell a loner credits him with too much choice in the matter. His only friend is an older boy named Kenny—a gangly post-adolescent described as "an odd collection of lines and angles"—whom he meets at the comics store. A student at the vocational high school, Kenny has no family life to speak of: his father is an alcoholic and gambling addict who often "stumbled back down the proverbial twelve steps," and his aunt works in one of the downtown pawnshops catering to the desperate, where she was once a customer. His only real relationship with another human being took place at a remove. One day at school he noticed an unusually good drawing etched into the desk where he was sitting, and produced an appreciative image in return. At the next class, he was pleased to discover a response in kind. Over a period of months, the drawings became more and more elaborate and coded, until Kenny finally dared a further step: he sketched the portrait of the other boy, whom he suspected he knew from the comics store, and received a sketch of himself back. But when they meet one day at the school's metal detector, Kenny—for reasons that he cannot understand—finds himself unable to meet the boy's eyes. His ambivalence about this relationship becomes one of the forces that will drive the novel to its inexorable conclusion.

"A child's world is a ripe grape waiting to be tasted," Lorraine thinks at one point. "The real meanings of words, the weight of consequences, *adulthood*, with all its responsibilities and implications, is as impenetrable to a child as martian trigonometry." Many of the novel's characters are children on the cusp of adulthood, waiting for the moment of possibility that will launch them over the hurdle of the present and into the future. They still cling to the teenager's conviction that it is better to make something, anything, happen than to worry about what that something should be. But the world of the novel's children is equally impenetrable to the adults, and Lorraine's vision of youth is sharply at odds with the way it is experienced by Newell, Kenny, and the other disturbed souls they will meet over the course of the night. Fleeing a casino cop, they find themselves face to face with the homeless teens lining the sidewalk, Daphney among them:

> Propped up against the base of the casino wall like an abandoned doll, the body was bulky in places, but still frail enough to look as if it might be carried along by a good wind. Electricity glossed over its mess of hair—kinked and matted strands of indistinct, artificial colors, clumped in all directions. Legs and shredded leggings were extended outward on a crushed cardboard box, perhaps a series of them.
>
> Through the spaces between the people ahead of him, Kenny could see that it was hugely pregnant, stretching out and sticking out of the bottom of her tank top, her belly this mass of flesh, rubbery in appearance, the color of uncooked bird. . . .
>
> Her arms reached and extended upward. Fingers danced, squalid with steel skulls and python rings. "Spare some change for some ketamine," she said.

Bock's style is muscular and impersonal, ranging in tone from sardonic (a soda is "sixty-four ounces of caffeinated carbonation") to euphoric. Though he sometimes overdoes the chilliness and the de-personalization, here it works to great effect: to the boys, Daphney seems sub-human, a piece of refuse left on the street. (The ghoulish-looking Lestat, who plays a sly trick on Newell, is even more appalling.) But a few pages later we see her again through the eyes of another character, a skinhead teenager who is always called only "the girl with the shaved head": "*like a sprinkle of pepper atop an egg*, is how she phrased it." Horrified by Daphney's condition—the girl glimpses her trying to get high on cough syrup—she is nonetheless kind enough to ask gently, "Should you be doing that?" As

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they talk, Daphney brags about her milk carton, and the girl with the shaved head asks to see it:

> Swollen and grime-laden hands bloomed, each steel-covered finger turning alive, adding interpretive pantomimes to the performance, becoming as agitated as Daphney's voice: "What happened was, we didn't have no place to put the milk and it went bad and so they made me throw it out. But then I kept some of the cartons, you know, stored pens and lighters and birthie stuff in some. The others I just folded up. But then, I was supposed to go base with these fuckwads right? … That's a total different story. Anyways, my shit got jacked."
>
> Disco ball refractions formed a kaleidoscope across Daphney's profile, imbuing her face with a pattern of small, almost translucent snowflakes. To the girl with the shaved head she appeared beautiful and full of pain and beautiful for all her pain. The girl wanted to cover her and protect her. For an instant, she thought of taking her back home.
>
> "I went to the stores," Daphney said, "but the cartons had all different kids."
>
> Her voice then became quiet, cracking as she whispered, "I couldn't find me no more."
>
> A lopsided fun cup emerged from her lap. Shaking away the memory, Daphney reached for passing tourists. "Please spare some change for some low-grade ketamine."

Lest we choke with sentiment, Bock quickly returns this reverie to earth with the revelation of exactly why Daphney has been desperately waiting for another girl to come along: not because she longs for female company, but because she needs help to re-screw one of her genital piercings. Yet the shift in perspective has served its purpose by humanizing Daphney, putting a face on "this mass of flesh." Much later, the novel will ask its reader to make the same shift with respect to the repulsive Lestat, who is suddenly revealed as a beleaguered and lonely boy rejected by a series of runaway girls, a boy who longs for "someplace safe and warm" so that he can "write a book that would change the world."

Though *Beautiful Children* is clearly sympathetic to the runaway's sense of infinite possibility—the notion that in a single moment one's path can be altered, that anything can happen—it does not quite romanticize life on the street. A relentlessly grim picture comes from Lestat, who wears two pairs of socks to avoid getting blisters. He has chronic skin rashes from not bathing. His fingers become "so caked in dirt that he had to stop brushing his teeth with them." He suffers from diarrhea and at one point has to use his sock as toilet paper. And like many runaways, he eventually finds himself turning tricks for food: "When Lestat fell to his knees he felt like he was betraying everything he knew about himself, and at the same time it was a very logical decision. Lestat needed money to eat. He needed money to live. There was a chance he'd get taken to an apartment where he could get a shower."

Beautiful Children has been discussed as a novel about runaways. But it is also, even more darkly and more importantly, a novel about pornography and prostitution, those twin pillars that together support what is euphemistically known as the "adult entertainment industry." Bock seems to know this world: the "small and windowless storefront," its parking lot blinded by a cinderblock wall, where an Arab immigrant mops the stalls in which the men watch their videos; the strip clubs where "champagne dances" are done with apple juice; the nondescript office where the videos are made, with a syringe of "instant wood" on hand for backup. Every man in the novel is somehow implicated in the porn industry—the question is how deeply. Are they just lonely, like Bing, a comic book artist who visits a strip club after Kenny is the only fan to show up for his book-signing at the comics shop? Are they apparently ordinary guys like Lincoln, who turns to watching porn on his office VCR to forget the troubles in his marriage? Or is it their life, as is the case for Ponyboy, the porn video bike messenger, and his stripper girlfriend, picturesquely named Cheri Blossom?

At Ponyboy's instigation, Cheri has transformed her body with what must be the world's most astonishing set of breast implants: as the climax to her act, she packs her hollowed-out nipples with candle wax and wicks, and sets them on fire for a lucky patron to blow out. (She has also sculpted her pubic hair into a heart-shaped bull's eye, highlighting the layers with different colors of tattoo ink.) A surrealist turn in an otherwise realist fiction is often more bewildering than enlightening; but in Bock's Las Vegas, it is exactly the right touch. If a stripper anywhere were to have flaming nipples, it would be in this spectacle of excess: "The neon. The halogen. The viscous liquid light.… The twenty-four-hour bacchanal. The party without limits. The crown jewel of a country that has institutionalized indulgence."

Ponyboy, the kind of boyfriend who sends his girl flowers paid for with a stolen credit card, has higher aspirations for Cheri. The sequence in which he convinces her to make a porn video, and what happens at the shooting, contains some of the more harrowing fictional moments in recent memory. Reproducing his son's image on hundreds of fliers, Lincoln remembers the Native American superstition that photography steals the soul; pornography represents the ultimate vindication of that belief. What could be more soul-destroying, Cheri will wonder, than having sex on camera? Yet the novel also reveals the thorough routinization of what has become the most institutionalized of indulgences. "Porn's not just a guilty pleasure for the raincoat crowd, not no more," Ponyboy's boss, a sickening porn mogul known as Jabba the Hut, tells him. (In a creepy marketing gimmick, Bock has lately been circulating a "viral video" that teases the viewer with a version of one of the novel's porn scenes—complete with a scantily clad "amateur" actress—and then cuts to Bock's website just as things start getting dirty.)

Lincoln, who is repelled by the fakeness of it all but watches anyway, is too sensitive not to notice the pain on the women's faces: "She was just lying there and … waiting for it to be over and to have survived, and here, now, for the shortest of snippets, one and two and out, the camera captured the blond woman leaning over, gently stroking the side of the redhead's brow. Lincoln would watch this and he would have to turn away." Ponyboy's true depravity is that, at the height of his porn addiction, the pain is what gets him off:

> the girls who gagged and threw coughing fits and looked dumbly to the camera for help and guidance.… Ponyboy liked watching the ones who understood this was not going to be the same kind of night they'd spend with a boyfriend, who knew this was not going to be a session of gentle and sweet lovemaking, and yet still remained clueless as to the significant differences between uncaring and promiscuous and even quid pro quo sex, and just what they had signed on for here.… What always got Ponyboy was the face of the girl. The pulse of worry as she realized she was in too deep. The pain. The abject terror. What Ponyboy got off on were the girls who grabbed the bedsheet and held on for dear life. Who tried not to look as if they were being split apart.

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At the end of that speech, Bock's lens cuts right back to Lincoln in his office, watching helplessly despite himself. Perhaps not so much separates the two men as we might like to believe.

All the characters in *Beautiful Children* seek means of escape—if not actually through running away, then through comic books, video games, music, porn. Reading a novel, too, is a form of escapism, and one measure of Bock's great success is that his book allows the reader metaphorically to enact this escape. More than one scene was so terrible to read that I actually cried out, but the pleasures of immersion in this fictional universe are nonetheless so considerable that—like Lincoln watching his porn videos, or Bing presented with Cheri's flaming nipples—you cannot turn away. Indeed, the imaginative world of the novel is so vivid and complete that it is a little dismaying to find, at the very end, the only false note: an appended list of resources and advocacy groups for runaways, as if the subject of the novel were just another issue of the day. A work of fiction is not a position paper, and whatever didactic purpose it serves is finally irrelevant.

As a writer, Bock is still a little rough. His characters' dramatic monologues sometimes run away from them, and certain anachronisms in the plot (particularly its heavy emphasis on videotapes) betray the eleven years he reportedly spent on the book. But these are minor complaints about a hugely ambitious novel that succeeds in ways that other recent (and hugely hyped) novels of similar ambition have failed. *Beautiful Children* manages to feel completely of its moment while remaining calmly unaffected by literary trends. It makes only the faintest nod toward magical realism. It is free of typographical gimmicks and other antics of style. And it demonstrates a deep, almost classical understanding of the way the novel form ought to work—the patterning, the layers of meaning, the motif casually tossed into the beginning pages that is picked up again later with an altogether different spin—that so often is missing in even the most lauded contemporary novels.

Early in the novel, Bing quotes a portentous statement from DeLillo's *Mao II*: "Beckett is the last major writer to shape the way we think and see. After him, the major works involve midair explosions and crumbling buildings. This is the new tragic narrative." If Bock has a spiritual godfather, it is DeLillo, who in *White Noise* and *Underworld* was unparalleled in chronicling the millennial hysteria that made American society uniquely prone to conspiracy theories and outsize fears. But the anticlimax of the millennium's arrival, coupled with the thunderbolt of September 11, sucked the air out of DeLillo's subject: what is a novelist of paranoia to do when disaster has already happened? And so his writings since 2001 have been characterized by a new flatness, perhaps because he no longer believes in his own conspiracy theories.

Without ever actually saying that DeLillo was wrong, *Beautiful Children* points gently yet insistently at a very different direction for the post-millennial novel of American unease. Early on, the girl with the shaved head—who will become, over the course of the novel, the victim of its most terrible crime—remembers railing at her mother about the corruptions of the casinos: the pumped-in oxygen to keep the gamblers awake, the windowless rooms to make them lose track of time, and all the other tricks that by now seem shocking only to a teenager. And she remembers her mother's response: "'There's not any grand conspiracy. I mean, yes but…' *The conspiracy of human frailty*, was the phrase her mother used." In this almost throwaway line, Bock locates the essence of the new tragic narrative: not what has been, or will be, done to us, but what we do—and fail to do—to each other. ◆

Alan Taylor
THE OLD FRONTIERS

SEIZING DESTINY: HOW AMERICA GREW FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA
By Richard Kluger
(Knopf, 628 pp., $35)

In 1893, more than twelve million Americans traveled to Chicago to attend a national exposition celebrating the quadricentennial of Columbus's voyage of American discovery. "The World's Columbian Exposition" summoned Americans to celebrate the astonishing rapidity of their own ascent to continental dominance and international power. Barely one hundred years old, the United States had spread westward across North America to become one of the great powers on the earth, a nation capable of exerting influence and might throughout the Americas and across the Pacific to Asia. That expansion and ascent had come at the expense of North America's natives—defeated, diminished, and confined to reservations—and to the dismay of rival Spanish and British empires, driven from the continent or shunted to its margins. In 1893, the American victors sensed their arrival at a critical watershed in their history: a radical shift as continental expansion gave way to global reach.

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Chicago seemed the perfect setting for this celebration of triumph and transition. No major American city had grown more rapidly as it became the commercial metropolis of the continent's heartland, the vortex for the region's lumber, wheat, corn, beef, and pork. In 1790, Chicago had been a mere trading post in an Indian world. By 1890, it had grown to more than one million people—the second-largest city in the United States. Almost all of its inhabitants were of European or African ancestry, continental newcomers who had displaced the native people. With good cause, Chicago's promoters seized upon the World's Columbian Exposition as a chance to cast their city as the fulfillment of the destiny set in motion by Columbus's discovery.

In 1893, the American Historical Association, a conclave of professional historians, also met in Chicago. One paper sparked unusual interest, and when it was published it became the most influential essay by an American historian: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" by Frederick Jackson Turner, then a young professor at the University of Wisconsin. Born in the rural town of Portage, Wisconsin, Turner was the son of a pioneer who spun tales of early soldiers, trappers, traders, and Indians. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Turner had headed east for graduate study at Johns Hopkins University, where he learned to despise the traditional mode of American history, with its emphasis on Europe's cultural legacy.

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After completing his doctorate, Turner returned to teach at Wisconsin, where he developed his own interpretation of American history. De-emphasizing the influence of European culture, he stressed the power of the American landscape to remake newcomers. In his address to his assembled colleagues in 1893, Turner noted that the recent federal census report had declared that the continental United States no longer had a distinct frontier line between the domain settled by Americans and a "wilderness" retained by Indians. "This brief official statement," he declared, "marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the American West." He concluded that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development." No derivative from Europe, American culture was distinctively shaped by an encounter with "free land" obtained along the advancing frontier of settlement.

Turner argued that the land remade Europeans into Americans. Plunging into the wilderness, the newcomers had to adapt to a strange and demanding land that mixed danger with opportunity. By adapting, they prospered. Turner explained:

> The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. . . . The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.

Frontier land invited settlers to become more mobile, shifting westward in search of better farms so that they could prosper. This geographic and social mobility rewarded egalitarian individualists, who would no longer accept the tyranny of tradition or the hierarchy of kings and aristocrats. Only a democracy could govern a nation of ambitious strivers, each persuaded that he was as good as any other man. Turner argued that the frontier experience created American democracy. He did not dwell on the ominous question raised by his argument: if the frontier encounter created democracy, could that democracy outlive its lost frontier? Would inequality deepen, impoverishing millions and empowering an entrenched elite that would make a mockery of the nation's democratic forms?

Turner's "frontier thesis" became sensationally influential largely because it was less novel than it seemed. Although a challenge to eastern intellectuals, Turner's interpretation systematized the conventional wisdom of middle America. In effect, he gave an academic polish to ideas long held by common Americans: that they had remade themselves as they had made the nation—primarily by defeating Indians and by transforming the supposed wilderness into a productive land of farms, towns, and cities. Turner subsequently published precious little, and certainly nothing as evocative and important as "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"; but he trained a large cohort of graduate students who helped to render his thesis pre-eminent among academic historians through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century.

Later in that century, powerful critics emerged to challenge almost every element of the "frontier thesis." They faulted Turner for treating the American land as a howling wilderness free for the taking because it was thinly inhabited and virtually unaltered by Indians, who posed scant obstacle to American destiny. Treated as doomed, Indians vanished from Turner's vision of history once they became constricted within reservations. Turner also paid little attention to the continent's Hispanic and French colonists—and he slighted African Americans and Asian Americans as participants in North America's transformation. Like almost all other historians of his race, class, and generation, Turner thought of the American people as fundamentally white and English-speaking. Narrating American history as an east-to-west story of expansion by Anglo-Americans, he and his disciples scanted the south-to-north story of Hispanic colonization in Texas, New Mexico, and California. They also had little to say about the French enclaves around the Great Lakes and along the Mississippi—and nothing about the Russian colonial advance into Alaska.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Turner's sharpest and most resourceful modern critic, Patricia Nelson Limerick, has asserted that "Turner was, to put it mildly, ethnocentric and nationalist. English-speaking white men were the stars of his story; Indians, Hispanics, French Canadians, and Asians were at best supporting actors and at worst invisible." Turner's critics also faulted his claim that America's frontier experience created a uniquely democratic society. They pointed to other frontier colonial regions—Argentina, South Africa, Canada, and Australia—which were slower to develop an egalitarian individualism and democratic politics. On the other hand, the twentieth century brought democracies to India and western Europe: places without Turner's version of a frontier as "free land."

Despite these academic attacks, Turner's thesis thrives in our popular culture, manifest in almost any popular history of expansion in print or on film. Readers and viewers welcome the familiar story of a triumphant western expansion that created a distinctive American identity. Richard Kluger has designed his big new book for such readers. In *Seizing Destiny*, he recounts the great multi-century sweep of American history. Kluger tells an epic story of people "ruthlessly transforming a spectacular wilderness into a mighty state." He adds that "no other sovereign entity ever grew so large so fast to become so rich and so strong."

Kluger begins with Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century and French fur traders in the seventeenth century as precursors to the American Revolution against British rule a century later. The new nation aggressively expanded by purchasing Louisiana from the French in 1803, but it failed in a bid to conquer Canada during the War of 1812. In 1818–1819, the Monroe administration pressured the Spanish into surrendering Florida and persuaded the British to share the Pacific Northwest. Between 1820 and 1850, the United States pressed westward to the Pacific. American settlers migrated into Texas, where they revolted against Mexican rule, winning their independence in 1835–1836. Annexation by the United States in 1845 led to a one-sided war with Mexico a year later. Sweeping American victories secured the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which cost Mexico

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her northern two-fifths, including California on the Pacific. At the same time, the British and the Americans agreed to divide the Pacific Northwest along the forty-ninth parallel.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, the United States pushed into the Caribbean and the Pacific to project its power and seek markets in Latin America and Asia. In 1867, the Americans seized the Pacific Island of Midway and purchased the vast Alaskan Territory from Russia. During the 1890s, a military coup toppled the Hawaiian monarchy and added those islands to the United States. In a brief war in 1898 the United States crushed the Spanish, securing American protectorates in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The next century provided a few more tropical islands: the Danish (now U.S.) Virgin Islands in the Caribbean and Wake Island in the Pacific.

Despite this dramatic and important story, Kluger's book often bogs down in long and repetitive accounts of the back-and-forth of diplomatic exchanges, recapitulating dead ends as well as actual consequences. After belaboring British and American negotiations over Oregon, Kluger observes that "by late August [President] Polk's patience had run out." Kluger's readers will understand how Polk felt.

To break the tedium, Kluger recurrently jolts readers with flamboyant metaphors. He likens one small colony to "a flea spitting into a hurricane" and Americans to "a porridge of diverse peoples … not free of lumpiness." Kluger likes his metaphors well mixed. Of the American Revolution, he observes that "here was a substantiation that theirs was a truly indissoluble union and no mere display of pyrotechnics sent skyward to scare away their overseas masters." Of the French Revolution, he observes that "French grievances were vented in alternating waves of liberation and repression that swept the overwrought masses toward the cauldron of anarchy. France became an inflamed society with a large and easily dislodged chip on its shoulder."

Undiscriminating in his use of sources, Kluger sprinkles his book with errors, large and small. He places the American attack on Quebec in late 1775 on the famous "Plains of Abraham," when in fact that assault targeted the Lower Town beside the St. Lawrence River. He confuses the Federal Constitution (1787) with the later Bill of Rights (1791) and the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), when he argues that the Constitution "provided a broad array of individual rights, installed brakes on tyrannical tendencies of the central government, and imposed prohibitions on the states to protect all their citizens against impairment of their liberties." In recounting the War of 1812, he colorfully refers to the "Tory-leaning province of Maine," when the region was actually an electoral stronghold for the Democratic-Republicans who declared war on the British. He labels the notorious John Randolph a "Federalist" when, in fact, he was a dissident Republican properly known as a "Quid."

Some of Kluger's bigger mistakes derive from a determination to cast the British as pompous exploiters of the poor American colonists. Kluger insists that the colonists blamed the British crown for the massive land speculation in frontier lands. In fact, leading colonists, including George Washington, were the speculators, and they bristled when the crown tried to regulate or restrict their aggressive intrusion into Indian lands. Kluger contradicts his colonial picture by later (and correctly) noting that the post-revolutionary land speculation "smacked of the same cronyism and inside dealing that marked the rampant abuse of public office in the colonial era." That similarity was hardly coincidental, given that the same sort of Americans speculated in land after, as well as before, the revolution. Similarly, Kluger repeats the hoary myth that a tyrannical king provoked the American Revolution: "the crown's demand for obedience and tribute money" was "a clear case—no matter how dressed up—of child abuse." But until 1776 the colonists hoped that the king would help them by intervening against the real culprit, which was Parliament, and its offensive taxation.

In addition to tedious stretches, bursts of overwrought writing, and frequent factual errors, *Seizing Destiny* suffers from an uncritical embrace of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. Praising Turner as the "eminent Meistersinger of the farmers who carved America from the wilderness," Kluger tells a trite story: "When a new world was found across the sea, the set ways of the old one began to be thrown into question." A frontier of abundant and fertile land generated "an unpredictably feisty breed of restless colonials, scornful of authority and orthodoxy." Unable to abide the rule of British kings and aristocrats, that "breed" staged a revolution to create a democratic nation designed to seek "new land for its ill-disciplined, hard-charging people." This recycled Turner derives from Kluger's reliance on creaky scholarship from the early twentieth century, and on more recent pop histories that repeat the old clichés.

To update Turner's story, Kluger periodically pauses to editorialize about the grim aspects of the American conquest. He wants to treat Americans' "incurable case of triumphalism," which has led them "to assume that their singular success as a nation was not only foreordained but also deserved." Kluger preaches that "those Americans given to blind chauvinism would do well to consider the darker side of the tale as well." He insists that we "gained a continental expanse by means of daring, cunning, bullying, bluff and bluster, treachery, robbery, quick talk, doubletalk, noble principles, stubborn resolve, low-down expediency, cash on the barrelhead, and, when deemed necessary, spilled blood." Mostly, Americans spilled lots of Indian blood and enslaved lots of Africans. The frontier spawned "a people unapologetic for the transparency of their abuse of the red and black races." He rues "the flagrantly inhumane practices of slavery and genocide that the American people imposed upon the non-Europeans in their midst."

In another bid to modernize Turner, Kluger draws contemporary parallels from President James Polk's malevolent role in invading Mexico to conquer the land that has become California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. A Tennessee slaveholder, hack politician, and conspicuous Christian, Polk felt driven to expand the United States to the Pacific at almost any cost. His acquisitive vision of American security and his devotion to military solutions ran roughshod over the truth and over the rights of others. Hinting at a later counterpart, Kluger notes that Polk "did not read for pleasure or to broaden his frame of reference; as a result, he squinted xenophobically at the world and perceived political issues in stark black and white." Kluger adds that "in his international dealings, he shamelessly overstated American rights and claims, letting partisanship beggar facts, and glibly cast Great Britain as the bogeyman in order to excuse his, and his countrymen's, territorial acquisitiveness." Lest a reader miss the hints, Kluger observes that Polk's critics "strafed the President with charges very like those to be leveled against George W. Bush for leading the United States into war against Iraq early in the twenty-first century."

Like Turner, Kluger insists that every people has a singular character that transcends internal divisions of class, race,

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gender, and personality. This lumping into racial and national types leads to caricatures. According to Kluger, "a spectacular virgin landscape of immeasurable expanse and superlative fertility greeted invaders from the Old World, and nobody occupied it but scatterings of nomadic, Stone Age tribes shy on the organizational skills or death-dealing tools to repulse the newcomers." Apparently unknown to Kluger, recent scholars have discarded Turner's stereotype of Indians as immutable primitives flitting about a forest primeval. In fact, native peoples had dramatically reshaped their environment by selectively burning the forest, erecting villages, clearing fields, and developing and cultivating remarkably productive plants—especially squash, beans, and maize.

Kluger may prefer Indians as noble savages who did nothing to change the land and who could do nothing to resist the colonial invasion, but recent scholarship has illuminated the natives' innovative ability to adapt to the colonial invasion—to complicate it, and to slow its progress. During the eighteenth century, for example, the Indians of the southern Great Plains acquired horses and became formidable warriors, who rolled back the Spanish missions and settlements in Texas and New Mexico. Such resourceful natives find no place in Kluger's narrative, which casts all Indians as an undifferentiated mass of suffering victims, doomed to destruction by their stubborn adherence to a primitive culture. Lumping them all together as Indians, he never differentiates between their hundreds of distinct nations, bands, and villages. Uninterested in particular Indians as historical actors, Kluger mentions none by name, save a brief cameo by Tecumseh and his brother, who appear after three hundred pages of collective suffering and futile resistance by homogeneous Indians. This anonymous lumping stands out against the blizzard of named Americans granted personalities and initiative in Kluger's tome.

African Americans suffer even more from Kluger's unwitting invocation of a dated caricature. He casts them as inferior to Indians and as a passive mass, deprived of individuality and of the capacity to resist their slavery: "Unlike the imported blacks, the natives refused to be enslaved and do the white man's work for him; death was preferable to such a defilement of their beings and culture." Sloppy thinking, rather than racist intention, surely explains Kluger's slipshod implication that blacks accepted slavery because they were less resolute than Indians. Here he misses yet another opportunity to convey the recent scholarship, in this instance on the Indian slave trade. In fact, the colonists did enslave thousands of Indians, but exported them to the West Indies to exchange for Africans. The exchange removed both peoples from areas where they knew the immediate hinterland and so could more readily escape. The bloody history of West Indian and African American slave revolts, runaways, and maroonage attests that blacks could, as readily as Indians, court death to resist slavery.

In Kluger's hierarchy of peoples, the Spanish and the French receive greater agency and individuality than Indians and Africans—but considerably less than white Americans. Drawn from the old Black Legend crafted by Spain's enemies, Kluger's Spanish were all cunning killers: "While there is no denying the Spaniards' insolence and inhumanity, the success and efficiency of their wholesale thuggery must be noted." A historian with some sense of nuance would apply that characterization only to the soldiers known as conquistadores, while noting that sixteenth-century Spaniards also included Bartolome de Las Casas and other Catholic missionaries, who provided a scathing and eloquent critique of the treatment of Indians. In addition to slighting the diversity of sixteenth-century Spaniards, Kluger treats them as incapable of changing over time. "Stiff-necked" to the end of their "totalitarian regime" in the early nineteenth century, the Spanish appear as utterly undeserving of a place in the continent. In fact, the Spanish belied this caricature of arrogant inflexibility. During the late eighteenth century, the Spanish reformed and revitalized their empire, adopting pragmatic measures that converted some frontier Indians from foes to allies.

At first the French seem to benefit from Kluger's need for foils to highlight the arrogance and the cruelty assigned to the Spanish: "France had not come as a blatant conqueror or looter." Kluger adds that "instead of disparaging Indian folkways and spiritual beliefs as the Spaniards often did, the French tried to understand them, learned their languages . . . and bargained with them more or less fairly." Here, too, he erases the diversity of the French with a blunt stereotype. We never read, for example, of the rage with which some French treated those Indians who resisted their colonial intrusion. During the 1720s and 1730s, thousands of Chickasaw, Fox, Sauk, and Natchez suffered death or enslavement in wars with the French around the Great Lakes and in the Mississippi Valley. If we want an accurate history of the continent's conquest, we need a defter analysis than what we can derive from the national and racial typologies of Turner's day.

The French appear equally homogeneous, but in a much less flattering light, when Kluger later sets them against the British. The French then re-appear as committed to a rigid, bureaucratic, and Catholic empire that stifled commercial enterprise and civil liberties. The British, by contrast, earn Kluger's praise for their work ethic and property rights, which he attributes to their Protestantism. But that praise also does not last, for the British turn sour when Kluger's version of the American Revolution renders them villains pitted against their own colonists in America. Converting frontier abundance into prosperous farms, the colonial Britons had become Americans with a new "collective character" defined by "courage, physical and mental stamina, and a positive outlook on life." As "a high-spirited, self-reliant people, irreverent toward wisdom and authority," the new American people naturally united against the constraining rule of

Syracuse

City with the loveliest name, Syracuse;
don't let me forget the dim
antiquity of your side streets, the pouting balconies
that once caged Spanish ladies,
the way the sea breaks on Ortygia's walls.

Plato met defeat here, escaped with his life,
what can be said about us, unreal tourists.
Your cathedral rose atop a Greek temple
and still grows, but very slowly,
like the heavy pleas of beggars and widows.

At midnight fishing boats radiate
sharp light, demanding prayers
for the perished, the lonely, for you,
city abandoned on a continent's rim,
and for us, imprisoned in our travels.

ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI

Translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh

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their distant rulers in Britain. According to Kluger (and again, to Turner), North America worked an improving magic on Britons in America that neither the Spanish nor the French could ever enjoy. Apparently Catholicism disqualified a people from the frontier effect.

Mixing a celebration of American genius with a hectoring of American greed, Kluger waxes most contradictory in recounting the conquest of Mexico's northern third during the 1830s and 1840s. First Kluger denounces the Americans as racist exploiters:

> White Americans, from colonial days on, had never shown their willingness to live at peace and on equal terms with those of other races, choosing instead to exterminate, enslave, marginalize, or otherwise abuse them, and justifying their actions by alleging their victims' natural inferiority. Their own compulsion to amass property and dominion went unmentioned. The Mexicans, of preponderantly swarthy cast, were a sitting target for virulent American racism.

And then Kluger proceeds to repeat credulously as facts many of the racist observations made by his nineteenth-century sources. He describes California's Mexican soldiers as "mostly lazy, thieving rascals." He also casts California as "a fragrant, primeval Shangri-la" and "a veritable Garden of Eden" shamefully neglected through "the lassitude or ignorance of the residents." Kluger concludes that "the Mexicans made poor use of their land, letting idyllic California, for example, wither on the vine." He then dwells on California's rapid economic development in the immediate wake of the American conquest.

In this way, Kluger carelessly provides ammunition for those who would argue that the abundant ends justified the nasty means of conquest. Indeed, he repeatedly, if unwittingly, suggests that although Americans stole the continent, they deserved it far more than did their inferior competitors: the noble savages, brutal Spanish, greedy French, arrogant Brits, and shiftless Mexicans. And so it is awkward and unpersuasive when Kluger concludes his book with a liberal editorial linking our current social woes to the bad manners of our territorial conquest: "Systematic inequities, evidenced by the cruel and growing gap between the grossly affluent and the desperately struggling, have polarized American society, created a permanent underclass of the disaffected, and cast liberty and social justice as antagonists to, not twin pillars of, the national creed." He adds that America's rulers cannot long sustain our nation's "primacy by claiming entitlement to mastery abroad and continuing to neglect the social pathogens stalking their homeland."

I wish I could share these conclusions, but reading them made me cringe, because they are tacked onto a long book that neglects to demonstrate the connection between current inequality and past conquests. To make that case requires more careful research and more disciplined thinking than Kluger brings to his rambling array of opinions and contradictions. As a result, his conclusion exemplifies the sort of lazy self-righteousness that has given liberalism such a bad name with much of the public.

Sometimes Kluger's use of national and racial types slides even into the social Darwinism of Turner's generation. Kluger refers to Americans as "a new breed" united in their greed for land. To explain the growing gap between the rich and the poor in colonial America, Kluger glibly asserts that "half of those who had come to America as indentured servants remained landless laborers afterward. As everywhere, natural selection worked against the timid, the lazy, the improvident, the incompetent, and the luckless." Discounted as slackers and losers, the landless poor vanish from Kluger's brutal definition of real Americans, who are essentially scheming over-achievers. And this social Darwinian explanation undermines his concluding sermon that Americans must address the deepening inequality of contemporary society. Why bother, if natural selection accounts for poverty and wealth?

Indeed, Kluger undermines the case that liberals could, and should, be making to find historical roots for our current crisis. He blames America's manic expansion westward on a "prodigious wastefulness" of the soil, owing to the "inertia, ignorance, or fatigue" of common farmers. In fact, that extensive mode of farming pales in comparison with the major role played in expansion by hyper-competitive speculation in millions of acres by America's wealthiest class, which profited by retailing lands to actual settlers. By lumping all Americans together in an undifferentiated "character" of wasteful greed, Kluger obscures the class differences that empowered and enriched some Americans at the expense of others. By neglecting the role of class privilege in driving American expansion, he cannot ultimately make a case that inequality today derives from the continent's conquest.

Kluger means well, but in trying to write a history of an entire continent over five centuries, he is in over his head. Lacking competence in the historical sources, he makes a hash of their evidence. Struggling to master the complexities of a distant past and a grand scale, he reaches backward for the reassuring simplifications of an earlier generation. With the best of intentions, he hopes to teach Americans to regret how we won this continent, and to reflect on the current implications of past misdeeds; but he undermines his case by indulging in retrograde and distorting national and racial stereotypes. Recycling those caricatures inevitably vindicates Americans as the deserving winners of a nasty competition with inevitable losers.

To achieve his goals, Kluger needed to make a cleaner break with the tropes of Turner's day. Indeed, he missed a golden opportunity to reform Turner's frontier thesis—which can be rescued from its distorting character types. Although Turner got almost all of the details wrong, he knew where to look for the distinctive nature of American society. The frontier thesis rightly regards expansion as central to the development of American institutions and values through the nineteenth century. That expansion created this nation's wealth, and its distribution of property and power, and much of its historical memory. But that distribution of property and power was profoundly unequal—it was, in other words, at odds with the democratic aspirations also generated by the frontier experience. Before HBO's series *Deadwood* succumbed to David Milch's rhetorical excesses, it brilliantly explored the tension between frontier illusions and realities—and particularly between the frontier ambitions of common people and the consolidating power of capital. Had Richard Kluger similarly illuminated that tension, he would have earned the pulpit to preach history to his readers. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Opiates

Last week was a good week for Herbert Marcuse. Bob Dylan won a Pulitzer Prize and Karl Marx was published on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*, and in German. In America, revolution is a career move. Marcuse thought this was the bad news, but it is the good news. In any event, it is springtime for repressive tolerance. The plan is working. There, on page A27, right above the Microsoft advertorial, were the surprising words: "*Die Religion … ist das Opium des Volkes*." Even more surprisingly, they were rained upon the heads of the paper's breakfasting readers by William Kristol, who graciously provided a translation from an old college paperback: "Religion … is the opium of the people," learnedly adding that "Marx somehow always sounds better" in the original. No, the English is pretty exact, and the German is not quite poetry. And over on the other side of the page, there was Kautsky, in Bob Herbert's unexpected column on *Die Agrarfrage: Eine Uebersicht über die Tendenzen der modernen Landwirthschaft und die Agrarpolitik der Sozialdemokratie*. I'm kidding, I'm kidding. But not about Kristol's Marx, who was resurrected to establish the culpability of Barack Obama.

Kristol was denouncing Obama's sensational claim that people "cling to … religion" out of economic frustration. The Republican protector of religion detected in this the Marxian doctrine of the materialist origins of consciousness, and more specifically the Marxian notion that religion is ideology, an illusion that renders the oppressed helpless before the forces of oppression. I must say that I somewhat agree. Despite Obama's protestations to local cable stations about the epiphenomenal nature of his analysis of base and superstructure in the Christianity of the workers and peasants of feudal Pennsylvania, his "bitter" remark looked to me, too, like a shallow reduction of faith to circumstances, and also like another expression of the sweet feeling of superiority that Obama frequently confuses with leadership. And yet Obama's disastrous sentence was not entirely erroneous. It is silly to suggest that the motives of belief are always high and philosophical, and divorced from human utility and human need. Amid all the buttery Democratic disquisitions on faith, it might be useful to remember the desperate and grubby purposes to which religion is put. The reasons for belief are human reasons, creaturely reasons, and so they are often unedifying ones. And the conservative beautification of religion, its denial of the cosmic opportunism into which religion sometimes decays, is incorrect and even hypocritical.

There is nothing wrong with the desire for consolation, but there is nothing especially rigorous about it. Suffering stimulates various kinds of hope, and hope stimulates various kinds of metaphysics; but there is no relation between the need for a belief and the truth of a belief. What is the spiritual status of need? When the Psalmist lifted his eyes unto the hills, he was wondering whence cometh … his help. The Psalmist was one needy mortal. "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications." And who would not? Such love has been given in return for a gain. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble": that is not exactly the ontological proof for the existence of God. Suffering is an old ally of religion. How else to interpret the outlandish particulars of eschatology, except as measurements of pain? Why would a happy person invent a paradise? It is because suffering is so hospitable to illusion that philosophers have often made an ideal out of lucidity. Ironically enough, the secular believer in man may live more comfortably, more compassionately, with the historical and psychological grounds of faith than the religious believer in God, who ought to be concerned not only with what works but also with what is true. The serviceability of religion may be real, but it is hardly one of its glories.

"You'd think he'd do other believers the courtesy of assuming they've also thought about their beliefs," Kristol remarks about Obama. *Auf keinen Fall, Genosse!* American religion may be the most unreflective religion in the world. It is unreflective almost as a matter of principle. The most significant American contribution to theology—the merry dismissal of thought known as "the will to believe"—lifts the soul up with probabilities and risks, with a vaguely economic calculation that the profit is worth the gamble. In recent years "studies have shown" that religion is even good for your health. What if it is good for your health, but false? And what if it were bad for your health, but true? It would be wonderful one day to meet an American whose God has made his life harder, not easier. But here belief is relief. It is "elitist," I know, to expect philosophy of every man and woman: whether or not all intellectuals are God's children, all God's children are not intellectuals. Still, Christians in America care more about what Jesus would do than about what Jesus would think. This accounts also for the wild politicization of religion. Obama, remember, champions mainly "the Social Gospel," and first entered the church in Chicago for the purpose of community organizing. But the Social Gospel is about benevolence, not transcendence; and there is no moral difference between the good works of believers and the good works of unbelievers. May the world be improved by whoever can improve it! As for Obama's neoconservative critics: they are second to none, and close students of Machiavelli, in their insistence upon the usefulness of religion to society as an authority and a principle of order, and also upon its usefulness to their candidates. They, too, hunger for the benefits, and not for the mysteries.

And now for the grossly undialectical bit. The ink on the *Times* was not yet dry when Andrew Sullivan rushed to the defense of his idol, I mean Obama. When one types all the time, sooner or later everything will be typed, and so Sullivan, in his fury against Kristol, typed this: "A non-Christian manipulator of Christianity is calling a Christian a liar about his faith." Ponder that early adjective. It is Jew baiting. I was not aware that only Christians can judge Christians, or that there are things about which a Jew cannot call a Christian a liar. If Kristol is wrong about Obama, it is not because Kristol is a Jew. So this fills me with a certain paschal wrath. Nice little blog you have there, Obama boy. Pity if frogs or locusts should happen to it. Let my people be!

Leon Wieseltier

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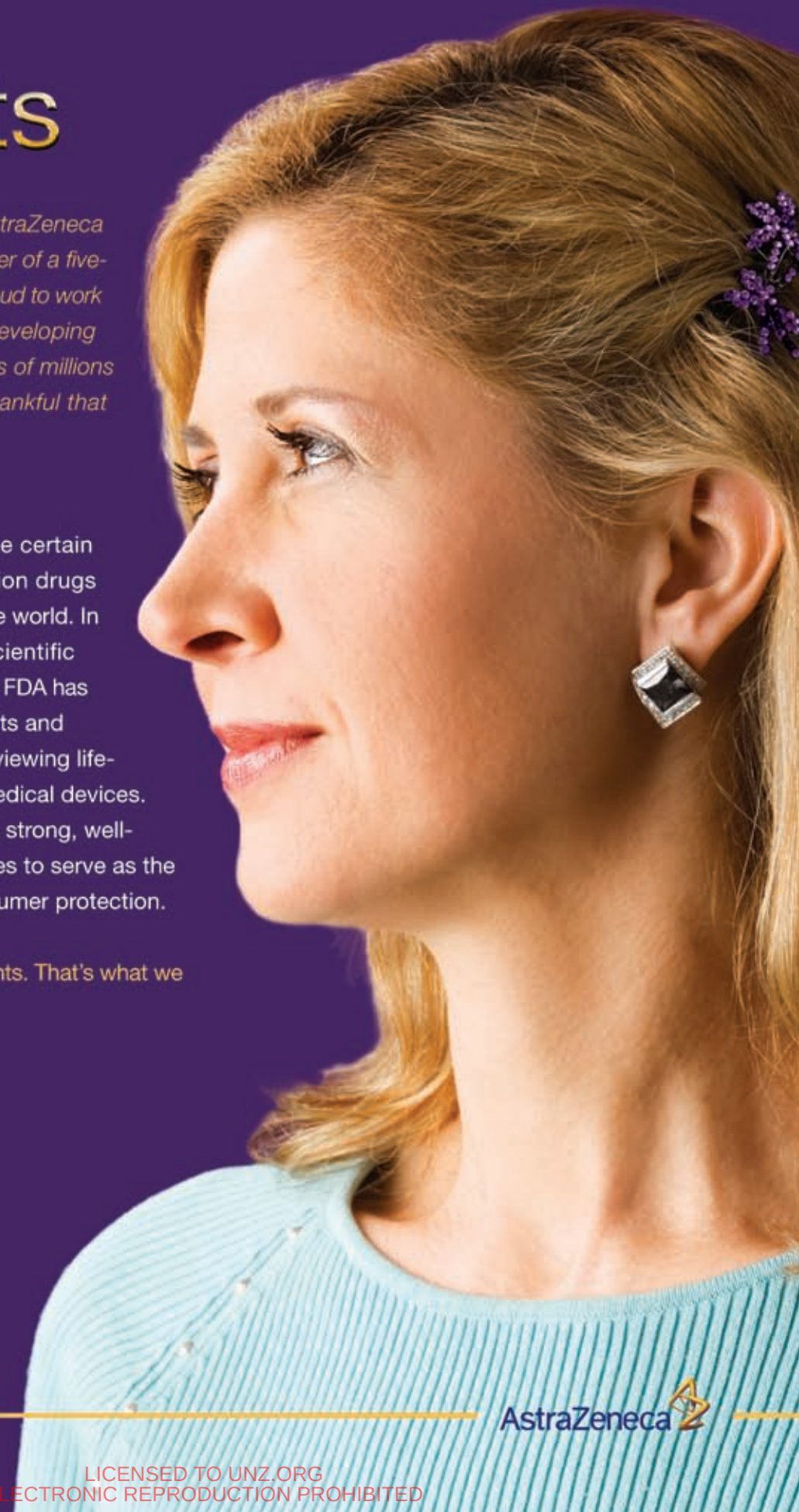

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